This book is really Gunga's and is dedicated to his memory, and to our mutual friends, the Tigers of Baluchistan.

By the same author

TIME OFF TO DIG

Sylvia A. Matheson

The Tigers of Baluchistan

With a New Introduction
by Paul Titus

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All photographs were taken by the author

Glossary

ALGOZHAR – double flute.
AZAAN – Muslim call to prayer.
BOURKA – concealing outer garment worn by Muslim women in purdah.
CHAPHRA – flat stone on which offerings are placed before shrine.
CHARPOY – wooden bed frame with string webbing.
CHASS – waterhole in riverbed.
CHERRI – circular, open-sided reed-thatched cookhouse.
CHEZEL – stone cairn.
CHHAPAR – reed bridal tent.
CHOLA – man's tunic shirt.
CHONK – game played with cowrie shells.
CHUPATTIE – thick circle of unleavened bread baked on flat metal plate.
DAGAL GARDI – treasure-hunters.
DAMMAMA – large drums, similar to kettle-drums.
DASTANAGH – type of ballad sung by hill tribes.
DAVTAR – professional reciter of genealogies.
DAZMAR – wooden paddle used for hand churning.
DEE – hand spindle.
DHAMB – prehistoric mound.
DHAMBIRO – three-stringed lute made from Pharpagh-dar wood.
DHOL – double-ended drum slung round neck.
DUMBA – fat-tailed sheep.
DUP – goat's hoof studded with nails, used to tighten threads in weaving.
DURBAR – royal levee or court.
EKTARA – one-stringed instrument.
GAZ – tamarisk tree.
GAZ-SHEKAL – (lit. 'Tamarisk Gold'), sweet excreta gathered from certain tamarisks.
GHANDAHOE – bush from whose berries a beverage is brewed.
GIDAN – 'The home of one's heart' – blanket tent.
HAL – exchanging the news.
HALO – wedding song.
HARTEER – woven saddle-bag.
HEENI – red dye, similar to henna, made from leaves of Mehdi bush.
HEENZ – goatskin used for milk or curds.
ID-GARH – Muslim prayerground.
ID-UL-ZUHA – Muslim religious festival.
JEMADAR – Army NCO, also used for Chieftain's representatives.
JHERRAMB – large-beaked, poisonous spider
JIRGA – Council of tribal elders.
JITTEES – pointed-toed leather shoes (Punjabi juttees).
JOOMER – folk dance.

JUBBRI or JUGGI – temporary wicker-framed hut of brush, used in cold weather.
JUNG – battle.
KABADI – team game.
KAHIR – (Prosopis spicigera), slow burning wood used to cook sajji.
KAK – bread cooked round hot stones set in ashes of kahir fire.
KANAVEZ – voluminous Bugti trousers, similar to Punjabi Shalwar.
KHARGHAR – primitive hand loom.
KHOR – earth from shrine, eaten to ward off sickness.
KHUDAL – more permanent version of jubbri, sometimes plastered with mud.
KHUMB – rainwater hole.
KHUSK – cowrie shell.
KIRRI – simple shelter of reed mats over sticks.
KIRTA – smocked, gathered, wide-skirted white cotton overcoat worn by men.
LAB – bride price.
LANGUATTA – cloth worn like a sarong, by men, in place of kanavez.
LASSI – sour milk drink spiced with herbs, etc.
MALANG – wandering mendicant snake-catcher.
MAKRI – locust.
MANHIR – open-sided summer shelter, usually reed-thatched, supported on mudbrick pillars or tree trunks.
MAST – yoghurt.
MENA – nomadic encampment.
MOOSWAG – twigs used to clean teeth.
MRATTA – enslaved descendent of Mahratta prisoners of war.
MULLA – Muslim learned in theology and sacred law.
MUKADAM – hereditary leader of Bugti clans.
MUQ – red earth from which a dye is made.
MUSHK – goatskin used for water.
NAL or NAR – flute made from type of reed, but without reed in mouthpiece.
NAMAZ – Muslim prayers.
NASS – narcotic snuff.
NAVAF – (new water) rainwater.
NIKAH – marriage ceremony.
NULLAH – riverbed.
PARO – family unit in clan.
PAT – dried alluvial mud.
PAI-ZEB – anklet.
PESH – leaves of dwarf palm, used for weaving.
PHARPAGH-DAR – (Tecoma undulata), tree from which dhambiro is made.
PIR – (lit. old) holy man or saint.
POR – makeshift waterpipe or hubble-bubble.
PULLOH – nose ring.
PUNKAH – fan.
PURDAH – (lit. curtain) seclusion of women.
PUSHK – woman's dress.
PUSHTI – long shawl worn by men.
PUTKA – turban.
SAJJI – method of barbecuing meat between two slow fires.
SARINDA – musical instrument (also known as SHAGH from wood); type of fiddle with five major and five sympathetic strings.

SAUNF – aniseed.
SAWAZ – sandals plaited from dwarf palm leaves (peesh).
SHAGH – tree from which Sarinda is made.
SHALWAR-QAMIS – baggy trousers and tunic dress, popular among Punjabi women.
SIRREE – woman's head shawl.
TALWAR – sword.
TANK or 'TANG – (lit. narrow place), gorge or pass.
TAMBOUR – shelter made from one woven peesh mat draped over sticks.
TARAGH – alcoholic drink distilled from aniseed.
TAWA – hatchet.
TEHSILDAR – Government official usually administering land.
THANA – fort, police or levy post.
THAWKH – bracelet.
TOPI – cap.
TUMANDAR – (lit. Leader of 10,000), hereditary title of Bugti chieftains.
TUPAK – muzzle-loading musket.
WADERA – petty chieftain, head of clan.

Introduction

Whither the Tigers?
Paul Titus

It is ironic that many of the published accounts of Baluchistan* produced in the post-colonial era have been written by Western journalists, anthropologists, and political scientists who have spent less time in the region than others who have worked here in development or aid projects. This is the case, no doubt, because people working in development are focused on technical issues and don't have the time or the inclination to either explore other aspects of the societies in which they are living, or to present their experiences in writing. We are fortunate, then, that Sylvia Matheson, the wife of an engineer in the Sui gas fields, had the interest, the time, and the means to undertake such explorations among the Bugtis and to write about them in an unaffected and entertaining style.

In retrospect, *The Tigers of Baluchistan* is a book that retains its appeal because of a fortuitous union of several factors, including the disposition of the author, the qualities of the people with whom she stayed, and the broader historical context in which she was writing. In other words it is the work of an interested person writing about interesting people in interesting times.

As regards the first of these, while living in the Bugti area Ms Matheson undertook a range of projects with energy and enthusiasm, putting up with considerable discomfort, even danger, to pursue them. Her pursuits—archaeology, folklore, ethnomusicology, and ethnohistory—took place in fields claimed by the profession of anthropology. While her account

**The official spelling of 'Baluch' and 'Baluchistan' is now 'Baloch' and 'Balochistan'. Ms Matheson's spelling has been retained in the introduction for the sake of consistency.*

lacks the systematic approach and thoroughness of academic anthropology, because it also lacks the overburden of illustrious ancestors, the opacities of theorizing, and a gallery of critical colleagues, her work has an openenness and unselfconsciousness that academic writing generally does not.

Its empathetic approach gives Ms Matheson's book an anthropological tone, nevertheless. Without either condemning or romanticizing, she describes the violence, inequities, and occasional absurdities of Bugti life as well as its warmth, beauty, and apparent miracles. Yet her book is very much a personal account, and Ms Matheson's feelings are quite evident when she describes the characters she encounters. She has obvious affection for her irascible personal bodyguard, Mohammad Mondrani of Mut, 'the most famous murderer in the Bugti tribe', for example, and we are also drawn to the others she briefly brings alive, including Tumandar Akbar Shahbaz Khan, the Bugtis' forceful nawab. Here another irony emerges in that the style of a book written by a dilettante thirty years ago, one in which the author is very much present, has now become that favoured by those in 'post-modern' quarters of anthropology who argue for making one's perspective explicit and against objectivity and other hegemonic narratives on the grounds that no single reality exists.

Along with her willingness to explore, Ms Matheson's outsider status allowed her to provide us with a number of insights into Bugti life and thought. As a Western woman she was able to visit both sides of the marked male-female divide, for example. Ms Matheson's interests really lay in the male world, however, and we get only fleeting glimpses of what to her must have been the extremely claustrophobic lives of Bugti women. To have provided more would have entailed making very different choices. Benedicte Grima, an anthropologist who has worked among the Pushtun, has written that only when she gave up contacts with Pushtun men was she accepted by women and made privy to their activities and discussions (Grima 1993:26). As an outsider,

Ms Matheson also had access to Bugti elites, while not suffering any loss of prestige by mingling with those of lower status.

Economic and Political Change in Baluchistan

In *The Tigers of Baluchistan*, we see the Bugtis in transition, a transition caused not least by the presence of the very company with which Ms Matheson was associated, and a transition she was very much aware of. The questions that must be asked are: from what were they in transition when Ms Matheson lived in Sui, and to what are they in transition now. With regard to the first question, there is evidence that the considerable power exercised by the Bugti nawab and his Marri counterpart is a fairly recent phenomenon, i.e., one brought about during the seventy-year period (1879-1947) when their tribal territories were subject to more-or-less direct British rule. Most Baluch historians claim that the financial and military backing the British gave to tribal leaders made the tribal system more hierarchical and less democratic.[1] While they may exaggerate the egalitarian nature of the tribes in the pre-colonial era, there is support for their view in the words of one colonial official, Richard Bruce, who argued that it was only the support of the British which enabled the Bugti *sardar* to stop his tribesmen from raiding the plains, and should that support be withdrawn his power and prestige would dwindle (Bruce 1900:19).[2]

Whether or not the power enjoyed by the Bugti and Marri *sardars* is a recent development, the relationship between them and their tribesmen has been seriously challenged in the post-colonial era. It has not necessarily been weakened, however, and it may have been strengthened. While the colonial government exercised direct control over the Bugti-

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[1]) *See*, for example Baluch (1987:141); Baluch (1986:299); Jummahmad (1982:158-59); Baluch (1980:58-60); Bugti (1976, 1995:52, 60-61). *See*, Swidler (1996) for a critique of their approach.

[2]) Bruce was an aid to Sir Robert Sandeman.

Marri area as part of British Baluchistan, the British themselves were light on the ground, and in return for chieftains' loyalty gave them a free rein to keep the Baluch way of life largely unchanged. That began to change with the creation of Pakistan. Economically, politically, and administratively new forces began to act on Baluchistan, as Ms Matheson's book reveals.

For the Bugtis the most obvious of these was the establishment of the Sui gas field and refinery. *The Tigers of Baluchistan* provides us some vivid snapshots of the initial stages of contact as the two worlds—the industrialized and the tribal—adjust to one another. While most Bugtis continued to live much as their ancestors had done, others, especially those employed by Pakistan Petroleum Limited ('the Company') and educated in its school, learned new skills, gained new knowledge, and entered more actively into a wider, monetary economy. In a study conducted in the 1980s Akbar Ahmed has shown that the presence of the Company caused inversions in the Bugti social hierarchy. Many Mrattas, descendants of Hindu slaves who traditionally held lowly status in Bugti society, joined the Company early on, and now, a generation later, some are supervisors and foremen with more wealth and authority than the descendants of their former overlords (Ahmed 1996). Also, the Kalpars, the subsection of the Bugtis which predominated in the Sui area, benefited from the refinery more than other branches of the tribe, which has led to conflicts with the Nawab as they have attempted to assert themselves (see below).

More dramatic, though perhaps not more profound, have been the political changes that have taken place in Baluchistan since the establishment of Pakistan. Writing at the beginning of Pakistan's second decade, Ms Matheson conveys the atmosphere as the process of national consolidation, which entailed some loss of autonomy for Baluchistan, began to affect life in the region. In the background of her book we see Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti move from being seemingly preoccupied with fittings with his tailor and trips to Europe

to being, in essence, a political prisoner as pressure is exerted on him to restrict his criticism of the government. Here we gain some insight into the cultural milieu which shaped him and Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri, men who would go on to play important roles in the turbulent politics of Baluchistan over the next two decades, indeed, up to the present day. In *The Tigers of Baluchistan* we get glimpses of these men in their role as powerful tribal leaders, a status which gave them legitimacy when they later sought to represent Baluch society as a whole.

When Ms Matheson was writing, the main concern of Baluch, as well as other ethnic minorities in Pakistan, was 'One Unit.' That failed system aimed at consolidation of various provinces and semi independent entities into a single administrative unit, West Pakistan, which, despite its smaller population, had representative parity with ethnically homogeneous East Pakistan (LaPorte 1975:50). Many Baluch, Pushtun, and Sindhis saw this administrative-political structure as reducing their autonomy, and in the 1950s and 1960s their opposition to the central government grew as a result. Opposition to One Unit in Baluchistan took various forms, including well-organized, though small-scale, armed opposition to the expanded army presence that it brought (Harrison 1981:28-35).

Much of the political opposition to One Unit was channelled through the National Awami Party (NAP), a coalition of left-wing and ethnic-nationalist parties from East and West Pakistan. Because it was an alliance of parties, the programme of the NAP was broad and addressed both national and international issues. Of special concern to Baluch and other West Pakistanis in the NAP was the replacement of One Unit with four ethnically-defined provinces. The NAP's platform called for 'cultural-racial' and geographical boundaries to coincide, and for those provinces to have maximum autonomy in a federal structure (Janmahmad 1989:316). Several influential Baluch tribal leaders either joined the NAP or, as in Nawab Bugti's case, actively supported it without actually joining.

In the late 1960s events in Pakistan began to move at a dangerous pace, and Baluchistan was swept up in the tumult. After mass demonstrations caused the collapse of the central government in 1969, One Unit was dismantled and the four provinces which currently constitute Pakistan were established (Jalal 1990:305-8). In 1970 elections were held which were won by the mainly Bengali Awami League, which sought to restructure the state. The army's refusal to act on the results of the election led to uprisings in East Pakistan and, eventually, the creation of Bangladesh.

In the 1970 elections the NAP won a plurality of the seats in the provincial assemblies of Baluchistan and the North West Frontier Province. When governments were established on the basis of those results in 1972 the NAP formed coalition governments with the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam, a religious political party of the Deobandi school, in both provinces. Sardar Ataullah Mengal became Baluchistan's chief minister and Ghous Bukhsh Bizenjo its governor. Their rule was short-lived. Despite a new constitution which guaranteed a degree of provincial autonomy, less than a year later the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, dismissed their government. In justifying the dismissal, the centre charged the provincial government with responsibility for several cases of lawlessness in Baluchistan and alleged its support, in collusion with foreign governments, of Baluch and Pushtun separatists. Scholars generally argue, however, that Bhutto acted against the NAP because having provincial governments led by a party other than his own limited his personal authority, and because of pressure from the Shah of Iran.[3]

Eventually the leaders of the NAP were arrested, an action that prompted an armed insurgency in Baluchistan. The army deployed as many as 80,000 soldiers as well as helicopter gunships against the poorly-armed rebels, and used standard

[3]) *See*, Pakistan (1974:13-21, 41-3) for the official justification of the dismissal and Wirsing (1987:11); Rizvi (1986:213); Harrison (1981:34-5); Burki (1980:96); and Sayeed (1980:115-17) for other versions.

counter-insurgency techniques including the oppression and resettlement of the civilian population upon which they depended (Harrison 1987:36). As in the past, Marris were prominent among the leaders of the militant opposition to the government. Much of the fighting took place in their area, though the guerrillas later began to operate out of bases in Afghanistan (ibid.,: 39, 74). The most serious fighting took place in 1974 and 1975, but it continued sporadically throughout Bhutto's rule, and only ended when General Ziaul Haq's martial law regime freed the NAP leadership at the end of 1977.

Nawab Bugti played an enigmatic and controversial role in many of these events. During those periods of the 1960s when he was not imprisoned he took an active part in the opposition to the government (Dehwar 1994:366). During the elections of 1970 he was prohibited from standing for office because of his conviction for murder (which Ms Matheson discusses in some detail) but he committed his personal finances and prestige to the NAP electoral effort. Some of my informants have described him campaigning tirelessly with NAP party workers, even sleeping on the ground with them on their trips between towns. After the election, however, the Nawab's relationship with the leaders of the NAP changed dramatically. Some suggest that he had expected them to name him governor in exchange for his efforts on behalf of the party and that he turned against them when they did not. In any case, it was Nawab Bugti's public testimony that he had been involved with the leaders of the NAP in a plot to create an independent Baluchistan with the help of foreign arms (a claim Bizenjo and Mengal denied) which gave Bhutto the pretext to dismiss the NAP government in 1973 (Janmahmad 1989:301-2). Thereupon Bhutto appointed him to replace Bizenjo as Baluchistan's governor and he held power during the period when the guerrilla war against the government began to intensify. He resigned the governorship on 31 December 1973 having served for ten months, the same length of time as the NAP had been in power.

Despite Nawab Bugti's role in precipitating the guerrilla war in Baluchistan, he did not become an apologist for Pakistan. He continued to agitate for greater autonomy and more resources for Baluchistan within Pakistan, albeit in relatively moderate terms as Baluch political discourse became radicalized during the guerrilla war. By the late 1970s his speeches were echoing calls made by Bizenjo and Mengal for a restructuring of the state to give parity to the four provinces in a confederal rather than a federal structure (ibid.,: 332, 337, 416; Harrison 1981:191). During the 1980s, in his characteristically provocative and idiosyncratic style, he made a personal protest against the martial law government of Ziaul Haq by refusing to speak Urdu, Pakistan's national language. He resumed speaking it only when elections were held in 1988.

In the 1980s, martial law and the civil war in Afghanistan set off new forces of social change in Baluchistan. These included the influx of hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees; the Islamization of society; the 'guns-and-drugs culture' war profiteers created; and finally the defeat of the Soviet Union. The first of these contributed to ethnic tensions between Baluch and Pushtun which had been growing since the early 1970s, while the last brought to an end, for the foreseeable future at least, any dreams, however unlikely, of an independent Baluchistan. When elections began to be held on a regular basis beginning in 1988 the former leaders of the NAP, or in some cases their sons, became active participants.

While the Bugti area remained relatively unaffected by many of these developments, Nawab Bugti was a key player in them. Free to participate in the 1988 elections, he led the Baluch National Alliance (BNA), a coalition of tribal leaders and left-leaning nationalists that won a large bloc of seats in the provincial assembly. Another coalition with the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam brought the BNA to power and the Nawab the office of chief minister (Titus 1991:250-1). He held the post until 1990, when new elections were held. For those elections the Nawab established a new political party, the

Jamhoori Watan Party (JWP), most of the leaders of which are tribal elite. An unprecedented third round of elections was held in 1993, giving the appearance that Pakistan had achieved at least a semi-stable system of representative government. The Nawab continues to dominate politics (electoral and otherwise) in the Bugti area and, though not able to recapture the post of chief minister, through his party he remains a force to be reckoned with at the provincial level as well. Currently the Nawab is a member of the National Assembly of Pakistan.

The Matter of Gas

Concerns about political and cultural autonomy as well as the utilization of their natural resources pervade the Baluch nationalist discourse, and Baluch political leaders have consistently pursued the issue of the distribution of resources between the centre and the provinces. Here again Ms Matheson's book provides interesting background detail, since natural gas is Baluchistan's most valuable resource and one that is constantly at the centre of controversy. Its importance can be gauged by the fact that assuring its supply was one of the central government's seven conditions which Ghous Bukhsh Bizenjo had to agree to when he was appointed governor in 1972 (Dehwar 1994:392). At issue is the distribution of the gas itself as well as revenues from its sale.

According to the Additional Chief Secretary of Development in Baluchistan, Pakistan produces 1.6 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually, 950 million of which come from Baluchistan. At present virtually all of the gas from Baluchistan comes from the Bugti area. Sui was the first and is still the largest gas field to be developed in Pakistan. Since then two more fields, Pir Koh and Loti, have been developed near Sui by the Oil and Gas Development Corporation (OGDC), an autonomous government corporation that is soon to become a public limited company. Gas from those fields is refined at the Sui facilities and, along

with gas from the Sui field, distributed to all major urban centres in the country. In addition to its domestic and industrial use, gas from Baluchistan also fuels some of Pakistan's major electric power generating plants in Punjab and Sindh. Similarly, another large field is located at Uch, also in the Bugti agency. Discovered in 1955, the gas from Uch had BTU levels too low and carbon dioxide levels too high for commercial use. Using current technology, a consortium of companies is now going to refine it and use it to produce electricity at a thermal power plant.

Many Baluchistanis interpret the disparity between the value of the gas produced in Baluchistan and the poverty of the province as a consequence of their exploitation by outsiders. When I conducted fieldwork in Quetta in 1988 it was not uncommon for people to complain to me that, while the rest of Pakistan benefits from Sui gas, many parts of the city, not to mention other areas of Baluchistan, were still without access to it more than thirty years after the refinery was built. Since then transmission and distribution networks have been expanded. According to the chief engineer of the Southern Sui Gas Company, the effort to supply Quetta with natural gas began in 1984, and distribution lines will be completed in the near future giving the entire city and its environs access. The transmission line to Quetta also brings gas to towns in Kachhi, he said. The company has also recently completed transmission lines from Quetta to Pishin and Mastung, and another to Dera Murad Jamali.

Baluchistanis have also received some concessions in regard to revenues from the sale of the natural gas produced in their province. Prior to the development of the field at Sui the government had legislated that resources below the surface of the ground belong to it rather than to those who own the land. Therefore the Bugtis do not receive any direct remuneration for the gas extracted from their ancestral lands though the Nawab is rumoured to receive certain perks from the OGDC, including use of a fleet of vehicles it maintains for him.

The provincial government does receive income from the sale of the gas from Baluchistan, however, and the amount it receives is constantly under contention. Like his predecessors and successors, during his tenure as chief minister Nawab Bugti demanded a greater share of Pakistan's development funds, of which income from sales of natural gas is a major block. Unlike his predecessors he was allied with the chief minister of Punjab, Nawaz Sharif, in his efforts to lobby the federal government. When Nawaz Sharif became prime minister of Pakistan in 1990, the National Finance Commission rewrote the formula for the distribution of tax revenues between the centre and the provinces. Prior to that, the province received royalties and excise tax revenues for its natural gas that were low by international standards (Harrison 1981:162; Kardar 1988:15). Under the new formula the province in which gas is produced receives the development surcharge, a percentage of the revenues from the sale of gas that the federal government had allocated itself in order to develop the energy sector. The total budget of the province has not grown with the addition of the surcharge monies but now all expenditures are covered by revenues rather than by the federal government providing grants to cover deficits. Baluchistan's elected officials and bureaucrats continue to press for a greater share of Pakistan's development funds, arguing that, because the basis for their distribution is population, the needs of the sparsely populated region go unmet. A recent proposal by the federal government to lower the amount of the development surcharge allocated to Baluchistan by 60 per cent in the 1995-6 fiscal year brought a sharp and, more unusually, united response by provincial legislators against the move.

Divisions within Divisions

Ms Matheson ends her book with the insight that, for Bugtis, tribe, even sub-tribe, remained a more important basis for action than broader sources of identity such as Baluch or

Pakistani nationalism or Islam. The political and economic developments of the past three decades have had seemingly contradictory effects in this regard. While the growth of education, market forces, and electoral politics have drawn Baluch into regional and national networks, they have also created new flashpoints at which inter- and intra-tribal conflicts have flared. The greater amounts of wealth and power at stake, as well as the ready availability of powerful weapons, have intensified these conflicts. And local disputes can now have wider implications as they affect provincial or national interests, or as the players attempt to draw the government into them. Old rivalries between the Bugtis and Mazaris, discussed by Ms Matheson, have been given new life by the presence of a disputed stone and sand quarry supplying material for paving the Indus Highway, for example (Khan 1994a). In the latest round of this dispute, Mazaris kidnapped five OGDC employees in order to put pressure on the government to gain the release a group of Mazari tribesmen kidnapped by the Bugtis.

Other factors which have sharpened tribal conflicts in recent years include a new readiness on the part of tribesmen to attack tribal leaders and their families, and for deadly rivalries to extend to tribes which are not neighbours and therefore not traditional adversaries. Recent outbreaks of violence between the Bugtis and Raisanis exemplify these tendencies. In this case the actual bloodshed occurred in Quetta in August 1994, when the bodyguards of the Nawab Bugti's eldest son, Saleem, and those of Nawab Aslam Raisani and his brothers, exchanged fire during a condolence gathering for a victim of another tribal feud. When reinforcements for both parties arrived the ensuing fight left at least nine people, including three grandsons of Nawab Bugti, dead.

As usual, these incidents of violence are the overt manifestations of complex underlying factors which in this case include political and economic rivalries as well as suspicions on the part of the Raisanis that Nawab Bugti had a hand in the assassination of their former Nawab, Ghous

Bakhsh. In the latter case, members of the Rind tribe ambushed and killed Nawab Raisani in the Bolan Pass in 1987. The assassination itself is a symptom of the stresses described above since it was ostensibly in retaliation for the murder of Rinds by Raisanis following a dispute over local body elections. In Baluchistan it is widely believed that the Raisanis hold Nawab Bugti to be the architect of the murder of Nawab Raisani. Circumstantial evidence supporting this claim include the fact that Nawab Bugti did not condole with the dead Nawab's sons at the time of the murder, and that the Rind leader allegedly responsible for the assassination holds a high position in the JWP, Nawab Bugti's political party (Ansari 1994). On the other hand, Nawab Bugti himself insists the Raisani Nawab brought his death on himself because he would not meet Rind demands for settling the dispute through payment.

Personal rivalries between Nawab Bugti and his Raisani counterparts extend from the formative years of Baluch politics in the post-colonial era, when the late Nawab Raisani opposed the NAP. In recent years his son and successor, Aslam, has also acted in opposition to the Bugti-led forces in the Baluchistan assembly, holding the post of finance minister in the 1990 government which was formed in opposition to the JWP. Some observers contend that the conflict between Raisanis and Bugtis has deeper roots and is a contemporary manifestation of the centuries-long struggle to control the rich Kachhi plains that lie below the mountains of northern Baluchistan. While Baluch and Pushtun groups inhabit parts of the region, large tracts in Kachhi district are in the hands of Brahui-speaking tribes, such as the Raisanis, which also have holdings in the mountains to the west. Challenges to Brahui hegemony in Kachhi have come from land reforms, changing relationships between Brahui landlords and their Jat tenants (see, Van Steenbergen 1996), as well as the efforts to assert themselves on the part of Baluch tribes such as the Domkis and Rinds. Significantly, the Domki and Rind chiefs have marriage ties and/or political alliances with Nawab Bugti.

The Bugti-Raisani feud can also be seen as both cause and effect of the nascent, but potentially divisive, alienation between Baluchi and Brahui-speakers. While most people in Baluchistan consider both lingnistic groups to be ethnically Baluch, some, notably members of the recently-formed Brahui Students Federation, argue that the Brahui are a separate nation and that they have lost out politically, economically, and culturally by being subsumed within the larger Baluch identity.

In addition to the rise in inter-tribal antagonism, serious internal conflicts have beset several tribes in recent years. Again, the Bugtis are prominent in this regard. While, as Ms Matheson and others (*see*, Pehrson 1966) point out, tribal subsections have long established the social and geographical boundaries that are the sites of rivalry and conflict, new social forces have sharpened those strain lines. As tribesmen have become better educated and more prosperous some have challenged the authority of the Bugti nawab. Ahmed (1996) extensively quotes Ghulam Qadir, *wadera* of the Mashori sub tribe, who criticizes Nawab Bugti's authoritarian practices, and especially his use of trial by ordeal to settle disputes.

It is the Nawab's fight with another Bugti sub-tribe, the Kalpars, that has been the most intense, however. The Kalpars' stature and sense of self-importance grew as they took advantage of the opportunities presented by the gas field in Sui, and they began to challenge Nawab Bugti. Amir Hamza Bugti, the son of the Kalpar *wadera*, had the temerity to stand against the Nawab, and later his son, Saleem, in provincial assembly elections in 1988 and 1990. When, in 1992, Amir Hamza was assassinated on the day of local body elections in which he had challenged the Nawab's candidate, the Kalpar *wadera* accused the Nawab and Saleem of committing the murder (Khan 1994a). Though the Nawab denied the charge, the Kalpars took revenge by assassinating his youngest and, by many accounts, most able son. After that the Nawab declared a virtual war on the Kalpars. After bearing

the brunt of a series of assassinations and large scale attacks with sophisticated weapons, the Kalpars sought peace by sending a delegation of women to the Nawab, the traditional act of submission among Baluch. Contrary to general Baluch tribal practice, the Nawab refused to accede to their appeal, however, and thereafter thousands of Kalpars fled the Bugti area, many of them receiving government support to relocate in cities of Punjab. The level of animosity the dispute has generated and the extent to which it has leapt beyond the bounds which traditionally restricted disputes to tribesmen, can be gauged by the fact that a lawyer from Lahore who was defending the Kalpars accused of killing the Nawab's son was gunned down in Quetta in June 1995, an act which was condemned by the head of the Human Rights Commission of Baluchistan.[4]

Conclusion

Thus the Bugtis remain entrenched in a world in which honour, expressed through the forceful and uncompromising response to challenges to oneself, remains a pre eminent value. Specific acts of assertion and vengeance follow from and constitute Bugti cultural logic and history. In their hierarchical social order the Nawab actively and intentionally epitomizes those values, and he continues to demonstrate his capacity to influence the course of events in Bugti society and beyond. History happens on a number of levels, however, and new social forces impinge upon the autonomy required to live a life of Bugti honour.[5] Those social forces have increased the vulnerabilities of the Bugtis, but they have also opened up new geographic, social, and cultural fields into which they can foray. While they have not transformed the

[4]) Soon after the shooting a spokesman for the JWP stated that it had been carried out by the government in order to discredit Nawab Bugti.

[5]) *See*, Abu Lughod (1986) for a discussion of honour as the expression of autonomy in a similar cultural milieu.

core values of Bugti society, they have increased the cost of realizing them. Younger generations of Bugtis may find that cost difficult to bear.

Finally, having reviewed the recent history of the Bugtis it seems appropriate that we update Ms Matheson herself. After leaving Sui in 1961 she accompanied her husband, Henry Schofield, as he pursued his career as an engineer and project manager in the petroleum industry. They spent a year in Burma, then shifted to Assam when the Burmese nationalized their oil industry. After a year in India they returned to England, then in 1967 took up residence in Iran. They remained there until the Islamic revolution in 1979, moving on to Abu Dhabi and, briefly, Bangladesh. They retired to Spain where Ms Matheson continues to live.

Throughout, Ms Matheson pursued the interests she displays here. She freelanced as a photojournalist for international news services, recorded talks for the BBC, served as a guest lecturer for Swan Hellenic groups in Iran, India, Sri Lanka, and elsewhere in Asia, and in addition took up writing mystery novels. She expanded and deepened her knowledge of archaeology and was commissioned to write an archaeological guide for Iran. Her non-fiction works include *Persia: An Archaeological Guide*, *Leathercraft in the Lands of Ancient Persia*, and *Rajasthan, Land of Kings*, and her fiction works include *Dig for a Corpse* and *Death is a Tiger*. Her world must indeed be enlivened by the rich tapestry of her memories and accomplishments.

Quetta
June, 1995

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1 *Background to the Bugtis*

'Come, let us visit the place where the Company works . . .
building steel forts . . . machines that roar in the desert
like raincloads . . .'
(Hazhab Nothani, Bugti).

'Of course,' said the Nawab, 'you must remember that I killed my first man when I was twelve!'

We were talking of tribal law and the fact that within the tribal area, murder was not a capital offence. The Nawab was in fact the Tumandar or Chieftain of the Bugti tribe and it was plain he was experiencing considerable difficulty in finding space for his long legs between the 1930 vintage furniture crammed into the tiny sitting-room.

I was in Quetta, Baluchistan, for the great Muslim religious festival of Id-ul-Zuha, and the date was October 1946. Only a month or two earlier, I had been talking to Mr Mohammed Ali Jinnah when we had both been staying in the Nizam of Hyderabad's guest-house, and it had been the 'Father of Pakistan', as Mr Jinnah was later to be known, who had suggested that I visit Baluchistan. This wild, mountainous and desert area on the North-West Frontier of the Indian sub-continent was bounded on the north by Afghanistan, by Iran on the west and the Indian Ocean on the south. And now, here I was, guest of the Quaid i Azam's right hand man, half Baluch, half Pathan, Qazi Mohammed Isa Khan, who practised law in Quetta.

The religious elders had conferred regarding the propriety of allowing me to attend the purely masculine gathering in the huge, outdoor prayer-ground at the Id-garh, and had finally decided that providing I wore my khaki slacks and shirt so that nobody could mistake me for a Muslim woman, I might be permitted to take photographs. Laden with my cameras, I had found a vantage point on the high wall where I could photograph the assembly

inside, and the overflow congregation on the road outside the prayer-ground.

Afterwards, amid the joyous embraces of worshippers greeting their friends all dressed in gay new clothes, I, in my old khaki slacks, joined in the traditional round of visits with my Muslim hosts. We'd come at last to a small house tucked away behind high brick walls in the bazaar, and the Baluchi business-man who lived there, summoned his pretty young wife to do the honours. This in itself was unusual, for here in the almost fanatically sensitive and highly religious frontier region, there were very few Muslims who would allow their wives to appear unveiled in front of men who were not closely related. And as I couldn't help seeing, there *was* another man already ensconced in the small room jammed with overstuffed settees and occasional tables and artificial flowers and knick-knacks. The tall, broad-shouldered Chieftain sitting on the sofa, sipping green tea from a delicate handleless bowl, looked like a Gulliver in Lilliput.

Just twenty-one years old, Sardar Akbar Shahbaz Khan Bugti, Tumandar of the warrior Bugti tribe, generally but incorrectly known by the courtesy title of 'Nawab' which the British had bestowed on his grandfather the late Sir Shahbaz Khan Bugti, was a sight to gladden the eyes of any romantically-inclined girl. He was well over six feet tall, with a magnificent head of thick, shining black curly hair and beard to match, lively intelligent eyes, a humorous mouth (what could be seen of it under the superb, curling moustache and beard), and fine, clean-cut features. Almost impossibly good-looking, in fact.

Only one thing disappointed me. This Chieftain of one of the most warlike and primitive of all Baluchi tribes, who spoke the English of any upper-class, public schoolboy, was dressed prosaically enough in an immaculately cut brown lounge suit which might have borne a Savile Row label and certainly didn't seem appropriate attire for such a bloodthirsty character as he claimed to be. But appearances, as I was soon to learn, can be very deceptive.

The story of the twelve-year-old's initiation into the traditional pastime of his tribe was interrupted by the appearance of our hostess in her baggy white shalwar trousers topped by a flowered tunic dress and a filmy chiffon scarf half-concealing her lovely oval face with its high-bridged nose; it reminded me irresistibly of the

lines written by an unknown Baluchi poet: 'Her nose is like a sharp sword, a blow from which takes her lover's life. I will be the smith who gives it an edge. . . .'

However, in spite of her husband's broad-minded attitude towards her meeting his friends within the four walls of his home, she was still compelled to wear the all-concealing bourka outside.

Now she offered us plates of sweetmeats made from boiled milk with honey and nuts, and more handleless cups of scented green tea.

'About this man you killed,' I reminded the Chieftain. 'Er – I mean, why . . . ?'

He sipped his tea and nibbled a piece of halva.

'Oh, that! Well, the man annoyed me. I've forgotten what it was about now, but I shot him dead. I've rather a hasty temper you know, but under tribal law of course it wasn't a capital offence, and in any case as the eldest son of the Chieftain I was perfectly entitled to do as I pleased in our own territory. We enjoy absolute sovereignty over our people and they accept this as part of their tradition. As a matter of fact my own father was murdered – he was poisoned – and what's more, I know who did it. It was his half-brother whom I call uncle, and who's been acting as Regent while I was in College . . .'

I choked on my tea. I knew that the Chieftain had only just left Aitchison College in Lahore, one of the then so-called Princes' Colleges of India. I knew that he had just come into full ruling powers over some 42,000 Bugtis, all agitating for an independent Baluchistan (just as twenty years later they are still full of impossible ideals). I knew, too, that while the tribe was notorious for its murders, its robberies and kidnappings, its Chieftains were remarkable for their audacious courage, their heroic accomplishments on the battlefield, their inborn hankering after any kind of a scrap, and their arrogant good looks.

I tried to pretend I was used to hearing such tales of violence over the teacups. 'So what are you going to do about it?' I asked as nonchalantly as I was able. 'Will you poison your uncle?'

The Chieftain seemed shocked at the suggestion.

'Good heavens no – poisoning's too good for such a man. Besides, I don't want a blood feud on my hands, which is what that would mean. No, I shall wait until I can get rid of the whole family – discreetly of course', and he smiled deprecatingly like

some Medici nobleman discussing the removal of a tiresome fellow Florentine.

He leaned forward, struck by a sudden brainwave.

'I say – why don't you come back with me to Dera Bugti, my headquarters, and spend a little time with us? You'll really have something to photograph there, I can assure you. Of course, it's only a poor little place in the desert but you'll be very welcome.'

Normally I'd have jumped at the invitation – I usually take people at their word, and half the time when I turn up in some remote, outlandish spot I find that nobody ever really expected me to come.

But on this occasion I had to say 'no' as I'd already made plans for a journey in the opposite direction, to the Iranian frontier.

'But may I take a rain check on it?' I asked.

Nawab Akbar Bugti laughed.

'Of course you may – delighted to welcome you any time', but it was obvious to me then that he never expected to see me again.

Certainly neither of us could have imagined that eleven years later, I would actually pick up that rain check and visit Dera Bugti.

Meanwhile, I returned to Quetta just after Partition, met the same Baluchi business-man and asked what had happened to the Bugti Regent.

'Oh, he heard rumours of Akbar Nawab's revenge, which was probably all that was intended, and he packed up and left with his family one night. Now he's living outside Bugti territory,' he told me.

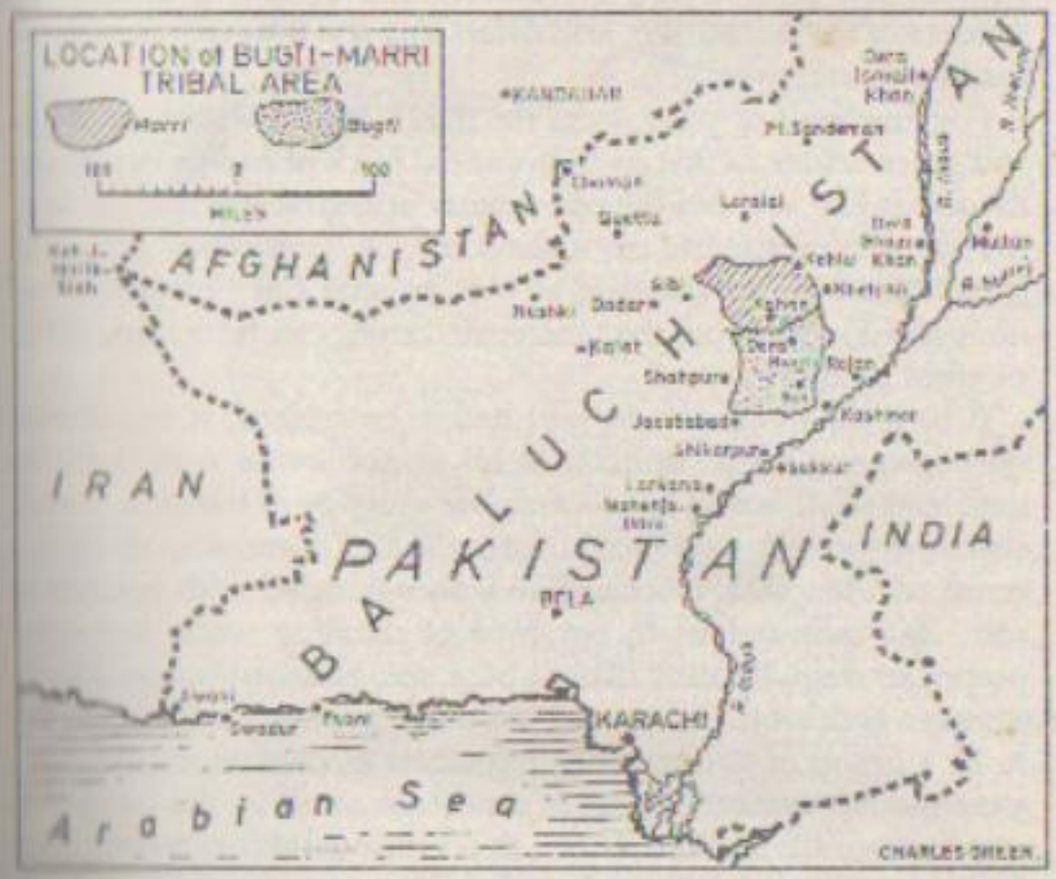
But assassination, inter-family and tribal feuds are part of every-day Bugti life. In the course of only a few years I have lost many good tribal friends in this way, and the former Regent couldn't hope to escape for ever. There were plenty of willing volunteers eager to rid the earth of this almost Shakespearian type villain, and sure enough he met his death in Jacobabad in 1951.

* * *

I didn't see my first *real* Bugti – I mean an unsophisticated, desert-roaming member of the tribe as opposed to the westernized Chieftain – until ten years later when I flew into Bugti tribal territory.

During the intervening years I had continued working as a journalist in India and Pakistan, discovering, quite by accident, a

prehistoric settlement in the Chagai district of Baluchistan. Having taken the advice of Sir Mortimer Wheeler who at that time was Director-General of Archaeology in India, later Adviser to the Pakistan Government's Department of Archaeology, I'd returned to London to study field archaeology. There, too, I'd spent some time working with the India and Pakistan department of the Central Office of Information and left them for a more profitable job as copy-writer with an international advertising agency. Then,



just when I was beginning to get itchy feet again, longing to get back to the East, I had an invitation to join a French archaeological 'dig' on a prehistoric site in Afghanistan.

This was in 1955 when I took time off from my copy-writing job and spent nearly six months in Afghanistan, returning to London by way of Pakistan hoping to get another glimpse of Baluchistan as I went.

Much to my surprise, when I reached the eastern end of the Khyber Pass in Peshawar, it was to find myself a guest of the Pakistan Government, as it appeared that during my COI days I

had interviewed the then Pakistani Minister of Information and, somehow, he'd learnt of my impending visit to his country.

I was delighted and when he asked where I'd like to go in Pakistan I at once remembered the Bugti area where – to give a reasonable excuse for a visit at the Government's expense – I planned to do a talk for the BBC on the largest natural gas field in Asia which had recently been discovered inside the tribal area.

So a few days after Christmas 1955 I was flown to the Sui gas field in the oil-company's chartered Dove, and had my first glimpse of the fascinating, arid desert that was later to be my home for five years.

For hundreds of years, even the tough Bugtis whose ancestors had taken refuge in this arid, unwanted track of barren desert and mountain had avoided the particularly undesirable stretch of sun-baked erosion that had no name until the 'Cumpanee' (Pakistan Petroleum Ltd, an associate of the Burmah Oil Company) had designated it Sui, from the nineteenth century fortress some seven or eight miles away.

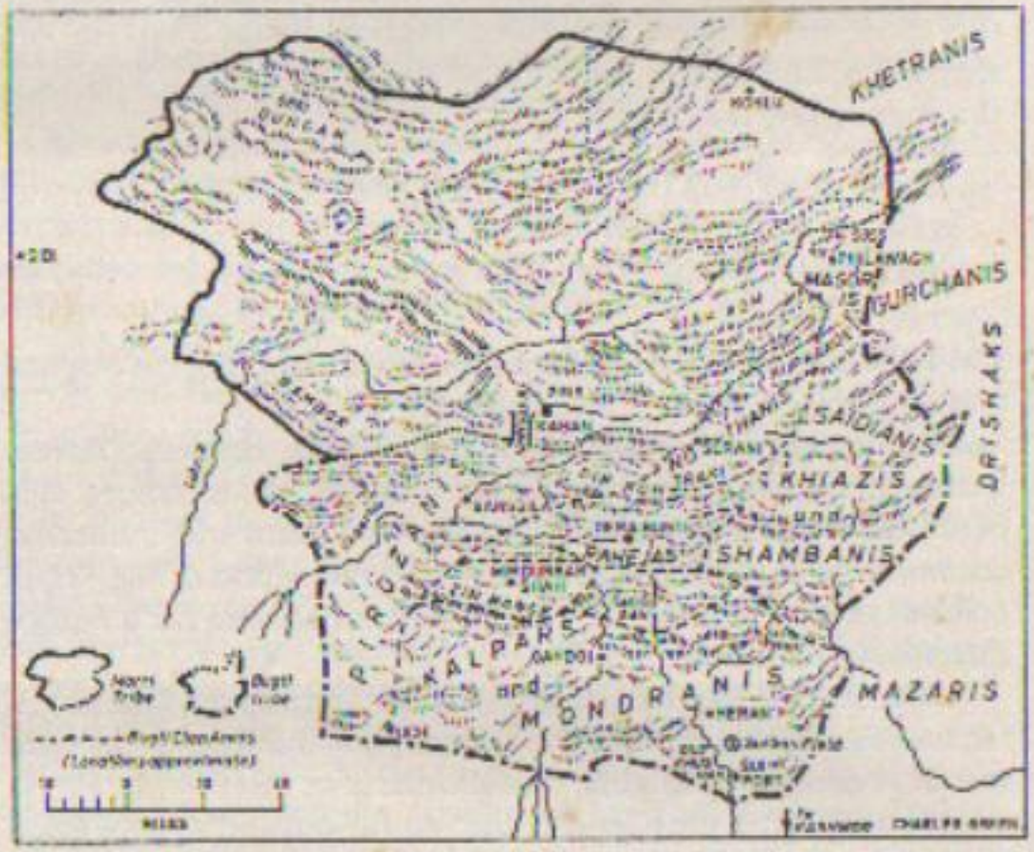
If by some ill chance the area had to be crossed, it was always undertaken at night; nobody in his senses would come here by day, least of all would he contemplate camping in the area. It consisted of some six or seven square miles of dome-shaped excrescence covered with volcanic-like stones mingled with patches of soft, dun-coloured sand; outcrops of dazzling white limestone peeped through the sand like the bare, sun-bleached bones of some gigantic prehistoric monster. Here and there were what appeared to be a group of ancient ruins but closer inspection showed they were merely weathered piles of sandstone worn by the hot winds into fantastically artificial shapes. An occasional absurdly theatrical-looking yellow sand-dune bubbled from the stones and to the north rose the sculpted, jagged sandstone hills that marked the entrance to the highlands. Flat-topped or carved by the winds into crenellated battlements and gigantic, bearded faces, the Lower Siwaliks emerged from the dawn mists in delicate shades of lavender-rose to resolve into harsh reds and browns and oranges; later they would dissolve into the midday heat in waves of sandy camouflage and still later they would stand in dramatic silhouettes of deep purples and grape-blacks against the startling scarlet, gold and flame of a desert sunset.

Deep twisting nullahs carved ruthless wounds into this harsh

desert and in the more shadowy corners of them grew the dauntless tamarisk and clumps of camel-thorn scrub clinging with stubborn tenacity to cracks in the iron-hard ground.

There was no natural source of water for twenty miles around. Rain fell seldom and scantily, some years not at all.

There was no wild life save the small darting lizards and whippy desert snakes and an occasional pack of jackals howling mournfully like maniacs in the twilight.



There was only the pitiless sun which in summer drove the temperatures reflected from bare rock and limestone to an inhuman 170°F which in the shade of the nullahs might drop to 130°F.

Hardly any wonder then, that it was nameless, a place to be avoided.

As for the origins of the tribe that had dwelt in this barren desert for centuries, even these are the subject of much argument and disagreement. One thing does seem certain, that the Bugtis are Rind Baluchis – the word 'Baluch' itself means

'wanderer' – and they almost certainly have Arab blood, probably mixed later with Rajput and Mahratta.

Among the Baluchis themselves, their traditions, handed down in ballad form, describe how, before the birth of the Prophet Mohammed, the Baluch people lived in the low hills surrounding Aleppo where they were so numerous that the Persian King Naushirwan, in his famous Shah Namah, recorded that the 'ground had become black with Biloches'.

When Yazid, the seventh century second Ummiyah Caliph of the Muslims, fought and killed Hazrat Imam Hussain, his supporters the Baluchis, were forced to flee to Kirman. Singing of this ever today, they assert:

We are the servants of Hazrat Ali
The True Imam of the Faith.
From Aleppo we came,
On account of the struggle with Yaziz . . .

The Baluchis are, of course, Sunni Muslims, accepting the original teaching or the Sunna, of Mohammed.

Later in the tenth century, the then Baluch chieftain, Ilmash Rumi, became immensely powerful, with forty-four tumans each of ten thousand men under his authority. Tuman and Tumandar are words of Turkish origin dating from the period of the Seljuk Sultans, and even today the correct form of address for a Baluch chieftain is Tumandar.

It appears that the ruler ordered Ilmash Rumi to send him a girl for his harem from each of the tumans, but the Baluch chieftain sent boys dressed up as girls, an elaborate joke that fell flat. For as might be expected, the Kirman ruler was furious and so once again the entire tribe had to flee, farther east still, to Seistan. Here they stayed until pushed eastwards yet again to the Mekran, when the Seljuks invaded the area, followed by Genghis Khan, until finally the tribes reached the fertile Indus Valley in the wake of Tamerlane's conquests at the time of the Emperor Babur and the fifteenth-century Arghun invasion of India.

Elphinstone believed that the Baluchis occupied the Mekran at the time of the first Arab invasion in AD 664, while Ibn Haukal, writing in the tenth century, was sure that 'Koch and Baloch lived in the Iran zamin, bordering Hind and Sind' and that some of them came from a place in Iran known as Bug.

Still other authorities believe the Baluchis are of Syrian origin, or of Turkoman stock, or a mixture of Arab, Rajput and Persian.

In his Shah Namah, the Persian poet Firdausi described how Chosroes, the sixth century ruler of Iran, tried to destroy the Baluchis whose banner bore the device of a tiger, and because of this tiger motif, some authorities believe the Baluchis originally came from the shores of the Caspian, where the tiger too is supposed to have originated. Certainly in their own ballads the Baluchis refer to the Mazaris, a Baluch tribe neighbouring the Bugti and Marri area, as 'Sher' or tigers, which is what the name Mazari means in Baluchi . . . 'the Baluch is a tiger, a hailstorm', sing the minstrels, alluding also to the Masori Bugtis.

Other terms used to describe the Rind Baluchis are 'Zarkhanis', 'Ravening Phongs' (another word for 'tiger') and 'thick-beards or black-beards'; both Bugtis and their close neighbours the Marris, are noted for their long, well-oiled, waist-length black ringlets and their thick, curly beards, contrasting with their white robes.

The Indus Valley Baluchis claim to have sprung from the four sons of one, Jala Han or Khan (the *K* is often dropped in Baluchi). These were Rind, Hot, Lashar and Korai, with their sister, Mai Jato. Of the five Baluch sections the Rinds are regarded as the aristocracy, the most famous of them all being the fifteenth-century chieftain, Mir Chakur Khan.

Mir Chakur, subject of scores of ballads, was tall, lean, sturdy, with fierce, shining eyes, himself a poet and a patron of learning, and above all, a renowned warrior. Forced to retreat from central Baluchistan by the overwhelming armies of Uzbegs from the north, he led his tribe to the town of Sibi, nestling at the foot of the Bolan Pass, where he established his Court, splendid in its pageantry. During Mir Chakur's reign, Sibi's population grew to a hundred thousand (today it is no more than eight thousand) and its reputation spread as the most cultured as well as the foremost commercial town in all Baluchistan. Not that that was saying very much, but Mir Chakur certainly enhanced its prestige with his ten thousand Rawchhi – a generic term for minstrels, dancers, story-tellers and cup-bearers.

Then came the Arghuns, who even today are referred to by the Bugtis as 'Turks', sweeping down the Bolan Pass, traditional highway from the north, and at the end of the fifteenth century, Mir Chakur had to lead his forces once again towards the rising

sun. He took his stand in a narrow defile called Chakur Tank near the Manjara River in what is today Marri tribal territory and it was here that the Chieftain prayed for aid against overwhelming enemy forces.

The warriors, as usual, accompanied by their women-folk and cattle, found the answer to their prayer in buffaloes straggling behind them, for, according to legend, the cattle were turned into enormous boulders that effectively blocked the narrow defile and gave them time to escape into the wild Sewistan hills where they finally settled down. Other refugees from the Arghuns joined them from time to time until the tribe was restored to strength and Mir Chakur was able to help the Emperor Humayun, marching back from exile in Afghanistan, with a hundred boat-loads of corn ferried up-river to Satgarha. Mir Chakur is thought to have died in Lahore aged about ninety-six some time just before Humayun conquered Delhi in 1555.

Many of the warriors with Mir Chakur elected to settle down in the Punjab, but a small section of Puzh Rinds decided to make their permanent home in the seven thousand square miles of mountain and desert in what is now the Marri-Bugti tribal area. The majority of them remained in the northern hills, founding the Marri tribe, but relatives and followers of Gyandar, Mir Chakur's cousin, moved down to the lower, hotter stretch of desert and became the Bugti tribe.

It was Gyandar's son, Raheja, who gave his name to the smallest section from whom come the sub-clan or paro of Bibrakzai, the Chieftain's family. There are seven Bugti clans altogether, the remaining six each claiming descent from Rind compatriots of Mir Chakur's; the two brothers Durragh and Piroz, Masor, Kalpar, Mondar and Shambo. Each clan again is subdivided into several paros each of which represents a single family and its descendants.

The five thousand odd Masoris who hold the northern area of Bugti territory are subdivided into three paros, the Nothani, Jaffrani and Bushkwani sub-clans, and these are the fiercest and best-armed of all Bugtis, entrusted with guarding the boundary between their rocky fastness and that of the neighbouring Marris and Gurchanis, traditionally their enemies.

Of the Nothanis, the Durrag Nothanis are the mystics, foretelling the future, warding off enemy bullets by magical incantations and casting out devils, while the Pirozanis, numerically the most powerful, about ten thousand strong, claim descent from a powerful saint, Pir Suhri; the Shambanis, at one time a distinct tribe of their own, were too weak to stand alone and joined forces with the Bugtis.

The Sui natural gas field was in Kalpar territory, part of it hotly disputed by the neighbouring Mondranis, and all the clans liked nothing better than a fight, if not with their neighbours then with each other.

Only three and a half per cent of the entire Marri-Bugti area is reckoned to be cultivatable so that most of the forty-two thousand Bugtis (with another four or five thousand settled more or less around Sukker in Sind, and about six thousand round Lahore in the Punjab) were forced to exist by raiding passing caravans up and down the Bolan Pass, along the Indus Valley or into the Punjab, swooping on peaceful settlements and military cantonments, kidnapping and holding to ransom and generally terrorizing the countryside then taking refuge in their mountain strongholds.

Now I was flying over this inhospitable land where Mir Chakur had sought shelter himself and where, much later, the nineteenth-century British warrior, John Jacob, serving with General Keane's forces marching to Afghanistan, was to encounter the Bugtis in battle time and time again.

Writing in 1839, he said, 'From April till October, the heat in this part of the world is more deadly than the sword of a human enemy and scarcely an escort at this time marched through the country without losing many men for this cause alone . . . the place is remarkable for its dust-storms of almost incredible violence and density. They occur frequently at all seasons of the year, sometimes changing the light of midday to an intensity of darkness to which no ordinary night ever approaches, and this darkness in severe storms lasts occasionally for one, two or more hours. These dust-storms on both sides of the desert are sometimes accompanied by blasts of the simoon, a poisonous wind which is equally destructive to vegetable and animal life.'

Only an exceptionally hardy people could have campaigned as the Bugtis did at that time, marching as much as sixty miles without a halt, raiding a camp or a military post, then retreating all through the intense heat of the day, the entire time without water

or rest. It was precisely because the tribes were always warring with each other that the British were able to find a guide among them, to lead them through the desert to their current enemy.

'War is looked upon as the first business of a gentleman, and every Baluchi is a gentleman', wrote Edward Oliver in 1890. And no matter how often they clashed in battle, the British had nothing but praise for the courage and chivalry of their Bugti opponents who consistently refused to surrender against heavy odds, preferring to dismount and fight hand to hand rather than to take advantage of the terrain and shoot their enemies in the back. Finally, however, exasperated by incessant attacks and raids on their cantonments, on 6 August 1846, the British declared the Bugti tribe outlaws and put a price of ten rupees, (about fifteen shillings and quite a large sum at that time), on every man's head, dead or alive.

The Bugtis speak an eastern dialect of Baluchi based on Persian with a large percentage of Sindi and Punjabi words, but their traditional songs are all in an archaic dialect which even the singers themselves find hard to understand and know only by rote.

As I looked at the stark landscape below – more like a moonscape it seemed to me – I recalled these ancient descriptions of a noble enemy and particularly of the only Bugti I'd met so far – the handsome chieftain, Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti who now seemed to me to be the very embodiment of Mir Chakur himself. With this highly romanticized picture of the Bugtis I wondered if I was to be disappointed when I actually met them on their home territory.

We flew over the River Indus and the gigantic Sukker Barrage and seconds later it was as though Omar Khayyam's verse had been written specifically of the scene below 'where some strip of herbage strewn that just divides the desert from the sown . . .'

You could have drawn a ruler down the division below as the Dove bumped slightly at the change in air-pressure from the narrow strip of fertile, cultivated land along the banks of the river, to the sudden stark desert. I watched the aircraft's shadow speed across abrupt ranges of limestone and sandstone hills weathered to weird castellations, across flat sandy desert broken by clumps of withered camel-thorn scrub and occasional twisted tamarisk trees in dried-up nullahs, then black stony deserts and, suddenly, we were circling a group of nissen-huts, a cluster of towers and

snaking pipes all gleaming silver under a wintry Pakistan sun, and we made the final turn for the landing.

As we did so, a man rushed out on to the cleared patch of sand, waving his arms wildly, his mouth opening violently as he hurled cries of alarm to something or somebody out of my view. He was dressed in the enormous baggy white trousers of the Baluch tribesman, with a loose-fitting knee-length white tunic-shirt, called a chola, and a tremendous, untidy, bulky white turban, the putka, draped over a little red topi cap inset with mirrors, from under which escaped long black ringlets flying in the wind.

Seconds later two camels and a goat dashed past the cabin-window amid clouds of sand blown up by the propellers.

My first tribal Bugti was clearing the runway.

I did my piece for the BBC and another for *The Times*. I climbed metal ladders up the sides of cooling towers and peered into fiery furnaces, examined 'Christmas trees' the like of which I'd never seen before, and listened without comprehending very much, to an explanation of how a purification plant copes with raw natural gas.

All the time I was longing to be out in the desert, out among the Bugtis, on the road to Dera Bugti.

But yet another year was to pass before I could pick up that rain check, a year during which I returned to London, married one of the engineers I'd met on the gas field that day, and came back to make my home in the middle of one of the world's hottest and most inhospitable deserts among the most hospitable, generous and quick-tempered people I've ever encountered, the Tigers of Baluchistan.

2 *Storm over Sui*

'Like a black-wind dust-storm springing from the
hard-baked soil, so the Tigers poured like a flood
through the pleasant mouth of the pass. . . .'
(Popular Poetry of the Baloches; trs. M. Longworth Dames. 1907)

FORK lightning slashed at the cloud-blackened night sky, moving continuously in a never-ending circle around the horizon; thunder rolled and reverberated menacingly, echoing from the distant, bare hills; and finally the storm-clouds unleashed their floods to pour down on the parched, sun-baked desert that had not known rain such as this for several years.

It was as though all nature was conspiring in the heavens to match the outburst of violence on the ground, where fighting men of two famous warrior tribes were engaged in a hand to-hand battle, using long-handled axes, primitive, muzzle-loading muskets, curved swords, daggers and modern pistols.

I'd only been living in the natural gas field camp of Sui for a few months, but although this was a tribal area, until this particular night it had never occurred to me that there could possibly be the slightest element of real danger here in the desert. Staring through the darkness stabbed by the constant, circling flashes of dramatic lightning, I peered through the high wire fence surrounding the gas purification plant and tried in vain to make out what was happening half a mile away in the old camp of nissen-huts.

A few hours earlier I had been telephoning a neighbour when the operator broke into our conversation to say that there was an urgent call for my husband. It was the Pakistani Administrative Officer with the news that the Bugti tribal employees were fighting in the old camp where the entire staff had been living until a few months ago when the permanent office and living quarters

had been completed. Now the nissen-huts, ringed with a stout wire fence, were used as stores, workshops and temporary living-quarters for Pakistani employees brought in from outside Bugti territory; these were mainly Pathans with a few Punjabis and Sindhis. Here, too, within the old camp was stored the entire petrol supplies for the Field as well as the garage and repair-shops.

Meanwhile outside, hundreds of white-clad Bugtis clashed and milled in the growing darkness, dramatized by the clouded, moonless sky slashed with jagged forks of lightning. Blood-curdling war-cries rent the air as hatchets, swords and iron-shod sticks whirled with abandon across heads and shoulders. Even as reinforcements of Bugtis streamed in from the surrounding hills by the hundreds, the news of a real, ding-dong battle attracting them from the furthermost parts of the area, the word had also reached beyond Bugti borders and twelve hours later we learnt that some two thousand armed and furious Pathans were gathered on the northern borders searching for transport to bring them to the aid of their besieged compatriots.

It was a situation that could easily touch off a full-scale battle. My husband's attempts to get through the crowd in a land-rover were completely frustrated by an angry mob throwing stones and threatening to overturn the vehicle. One ancient warrior seated himself in the path of the land-rover, defying anybody to enter over his dead body.

Finally it was decided to transfer all the staff living in unprotected bungalows and family-quarters, to the somewhat dubious safety of the purification plant area which itself was guarded only by a fairly high wire fence which any agile tribesmen could have negotiated with ease. But it did mean that we would all be together and therefore less vulnerable to attack.

'But what's it all about?' I asked my harassed husband. I glimpsed him briefly as he came back to the bungalow to urge me to grab my most precious portable possessions and join the crowd at the plant.

'Nobody knows for sure – some quarrel between a Pathan and a Bugti. The wildest rumours are floating around. One is that the Pathan struck the Tehsildar's little daughter (the Tehsildar was the local Bugti representative of the Pakistan Government). Anyhow, you'd better get a move on. I must get back to the old camp.'

I gathered my cameras and a raincoat and reluctantly climbed

into the land-rover leaving the servants behind to guard the bungalow and feeling as though I was deserting them in the face of battle.

The Company had been only a short time in the tribal area but during that period there had been more than one incident of exploration and drilling-parties being shot up by tribesmen who regarded with the utmost suspicion what they thought to be the intrusion of officialdom into their territory, and nobody could predict what turn the Bugti temper might take next. Maybe they'd seize the opportunity to attack Company property and employees, hoping to scare them out once and for all.

It was like a scene from Dante's Inferno. Bewildered women, shapeless ghosts in white or black bourkas billowing in the high wind, clutching crying babies in their arms, a taggle of sniffling children hanging round their ankles, scurried behind their men who strode ahead with small children on their shoulders and bundles of household goods in their hands.

By this time the heavens had really opened and the rain fell as though to rival Niagara. Lightning still circled the camp and thunderclaps sounded like death-knells; in the brilliant flashes we had occasional glimpses of sinister-looking figures armed to the teeth, hurrying through the desert on the other side of the fence. But the old camp was out of sight and as the rain-soaked refugees tried to find scanty shelter under the snaking silver pipes overhead, children howled and the men-folk gripped their makeshift weapons. I saw a cricket-bat and hockey-sticks, a length of piping, a couple of shotguns and one small boy clutching a huge tree-branch bigger than himself.

The rain turned the ground into a muddy, cinder-filled morass, but in utter disregard of the weather, one elderly Punjabi found a wooden box-lid, placed a soaking green handkerchief on his head, and prostrated himself in prayer with as little concern as if he was peacefully praying in the mosque.

Bitter lamentations rose from all sides as these town-dwellers who had been exiled to the desert, waited for what they were sure would be a devastating attack from a fierce warrior-tribe.

Little gushes of steam here and there, escaping from the maze of pipes and the cooling towers, together with the usual assortment of weird noises now magnified in the night, testified to the uninterrupted working of the plant, but heightened the tension.

After several vain attempts to enter the old camp to treat the wounded, the Company doctor, a shy, quiet, mild-mannered Bengali, was finally allowed alone into the besieged camp. But he was only permitted to see one wounded man although he knew for certain there were several others – the Pathans had hidden them away for fear the doctor would inform the Bugtis of their presence and the tribesmen would be encouraged to continue the fight.

'There must be about five hundred Bugtis round the camp,' he told us after a second visit when he managed to ferret out four more victims. The Pathans, Sindhis and Punjabis – mostly drivers or semi-skilled workers, were all bolted and barred inside their nissen-huts, including one Pathan with a gaping hole in his head, split open with an axe.

A third visit by Doctor Chaudhury resulted in the discovery of a few more victims and one dead man, but mysteriously enough, by morning, the corpse had disappeared.

Hanging about in the rain, waiting for news from the 'loyal' Bugtis acting as messengers between the besiegers and ourselves, I began to recall a number of small incidents that I could now see pointed to something brewing in the last day or two.

That morning I'd gone down to the Company-run food-shop and met Wagdar, a Bugti musician who had promised to come to the bungalow that evening to give me a lesson on the sarunda, a stringed-instrument.

'Don't forget now, will you?' I called to him in my halting Urdu. His wasn't much better.

Wagdar seemed a little uneasy and unlike his usual light-hearted self, strangely reluctant to make any promises. Yet only yesterday when I'd been recording some of his own compositions, he'd been full of enthusiasm at the prospect of acquiring a paying-pupil.

'What time will you come this evening?' I persisted.

'Sham-ko?' he had asked with an air of surprise, as though the idea of visiting me that evening was an entirely new one to him.

'Na, Memsahib – kal, kal subha.'

Since I wanted to process my films that night, I had agreed to a lesson next morning instead. But now both Wagdar's postponement and the tense atmosphere at the shopping-centre, that I had put down to the electric storm hanging over the hills, acquired a new significance.

The Bugtis seemed to have divided their loyalties in this affair.

The Kalpars and Mondranis, two subsections of the tribe whose lands were either part of the gas-field itself, or adjoined it, many of whose members therefore worked as labourers or watchmen, were all for law and order and wanted as little as possible to do with the dispute. Members of these clans gathered in small groups round the plant as if to indicate that if it came to a showdown they would do their best to protect both the plant and their jobs.

Ranged against the 'intruding' Pathans and other Company employees were the Mrattas who were not really Bugtis at all but descendants of Hindu prisoners captured in past battles and enslaved by the Bugtis. By now the Mrattas were Muslims and had quite a lot of Bugti blood as their women were regarded as fair game for all Bugtis. No male Mratta dare so much as glance at a Bugti woman, of course, any more than a Bugti might do so, and although in 1948 the Chieftain had officially declared the Mrattas freed, they still lived in their own segregated camps and were employed by the Company in their traditional menial capacity of sweepers and blacksmiths.

Some time after midnight the heavy storm seemed to have dampened the initial ardour of the warriors, and the women and children, reluctant to return to their unprotected homes, were escorted to the newly-built club house to settle down on settees and chairs while their men-folk patrolled the grounds outside.

Back in our bungalow I found our old cook courageously sitting cross-legged on the verandah, his steel-rimmed spectacles on the end of his nose as he peered short-sightedly into the darkness; he had an enormous stick across his knees and a fearsome array of freshly-sharpened kitchen-knives by his side and was obviously fully prepared for battle.

First light brought the Company's Dove summoned by direct radio link from Karachi. It was to fly on to Quetta to fetch the Political Agent and the Bugti Chieftain who had been spending the hot weather in his summer home in the hills, and who was supposed to be leaving for a holiday in Europe. In fact, as we learnt later, the Bugtis had begun their battle a day too soon, being under the impression that the Tumandar had already left and could not be called back to intervene. And without the Chieftain's personal intervention there is little doubt that the riot could have grown into something far more serious. It seemed significant, too, that Mir Ghulam Haidar, a very smooth, oily-tongued individual who

was the Chieftain's kinsman and Jemadar or personal representative in Sui, authorized to act on his behalf when the Chieftain was away, had chosen this moment to go to Quetta shopping for his daughter's trousseau.

Mir Ghulam Haidar dealt with all Bugtis employed by the Company, and any Bugti seeking work at Sui found himself having to pay some twenty rupees a month out of his wages to the Jemadar as a kickback – a well-established custom in the East but one that didn't add to the man's popularity; as a result, he was for ever requesting special Company housing and protection.

Sui was now left without a sufficiently senior spokesman to participate in any talks, so Mir Ghulam Haidar was also asked to cut short his stay in Quetta and board the plane that morning.

The sky was ominously heavy and grey, almost touching the desert, and in five years' stay at Sui I never again saw weather to match it. The Bugtis cheerfully reported for work as usual, but the non-Bugti Pakistani covenanted staff refused to emerge without an armed guard – and the only armed guard the Field possessed were Bugtis!

Maybe the unfortunate townsfolk were right to distrust the tribesmen. I heard later that the Bugtis had carried out their traditional victory ceremony of forcing their enemies to kneel on the ground trailing their beards in the dust and kissing their conquerors' feet. A deadly insult, and for proud Pathans in particular, a worse form of torture than anything else the Bugtis could have devised.

Perhaps nobody will ever learn the true facts behind that night's rumpus. Certainly it all began over a comparatively minor incident. A Mratta lorry driver, young and new to his job and still under training, had driven on the wrong side of the road; a much older and experienced Pathan driver had reprimanded him. This was the official story. Rumour had it that a Pathan had in fact been pestering one of the Mratta women and there was no tribal law that forced a Mratta to stand by and watch a non-Bugti molest his women-folk.

Meanwhile, the Chieftain had been persuaded to miss a fitting with his tailor and the evening train he had planned to take to Karachi, and instead to fly to Sui with the Company's Exploration Manager, the Political Agent and Mir Ghulam Haidar.

As the plane crossed the Zin Range a few miles from the

gas-field, they could see hundreds of Bugti tribesmen streaming back into the security of their hills, on foot, on camels and on horses. Nawab Akbar Bugti said he had been reminded of an incident sung by countless Bugti minstrels, of how, in the scaring hot August of 1840, the neighbouring Marri tribe were on top of the same range of hills, holding a pass against the British who had marched into the territory, bent on punishing the raiding tribes and on relieving the small British force that had been left to occupy the Marri stronghold of Kahan.

'The British were at the foot of the range and Dodai Khan, the Marri Chieftain, led his horsemen into battle, galloping full-pelt down the precipitous slopes to the very mouth of the British cannon blasting into his men,' the Chieftain told his fellow-passengers.

'One of the Marri waderas (headman of a clan) reached the cannon ahead of his Chieftain, whipped off his pushti and thrust it down the mouth of the cannon with his arm. Then he shouted to the Marris to come on because he had covered the entrance to the devil's cave and stifled the dragon's mouth! next moment the cannon went off and the wadera was blown to pieces!'

The same cannon, captured eventually by the Bugtis, became a trophy in tribal headquarters for many years.

Perhaps in agreeing to fly into this trouble-spot with a Government and oil-company official, the Bugti Tumandar felt he too was metaphorically covering the present devil's cave – or dragon's mouth.

Round the gas field offices, several hundred armed Bugtis had gathered while their Chieftain sat inside in conference with the officials. I recognized many of the men but most had come from distant areas and this was their first glimpse of what they called a 'steel city' in the desert, of motor-cars and running water and permanent brick-built houses and of gardens with flowers and grass, and it was all utterly new and bewildering to these open-mouthed, heavily-armed, and very wild-looking newcomers.

Presently a small group emerged from the offices and strolled to an open space a few yards away – the Chieftain, a tall, rangy figure in a slouch-hat, bush-jacket and khaki trousers, with his kinsman Mir Ghulam Haidar and the Political Agent. Here in the open they talked over the situation with representatives of the Mrattas and the Pakistani staff, and in the end it was agreed that

twenty-five policemen would be brought into Sui temporarily, from Jacobabad and Sukker, to be replaced later on by forty tribal levies from different Bugti clans, none of whom was represented on the gas-field itself.

There was a drawback to this scheme; the levies were paid twenty rupees a month – about thirty shillings sterling – and had to provide their own food and shelter. In Sui they would find other members of the tribe earning nearly three times that amount just doing unskilled work such as pushing a wheelbarrow or digging ditches, and this might well lead to discontent and further complications.

But for the next week or two, Sui was strangely unlike its normal tranquil self. Electric storms, sand storms, torrential rain, low cloud swallowing up the entire country around, all combined to add to the general feeling of unease. Strange new uniforms were seen as the armed police arrived in trucks; accommodation had to be found for them, trenches dug, and machine-gun posts manned around bungalows and plant, and all Bugtis now had to give up their arms as they entered the camp.

Gradually life returned to normal but it seemed my chances of getting out among the tribe, particularly among the wild members of it I had seen outside the office that day, were growing more and more remote.

Before I could do anything at all I had to gain their confidence and, above all, I needed a personal guide and bodyguard. I was to find him in one of the tribe's most notorious murderers – one Mohammed Mondrani of Mut.

* * *

'Want to meet the most famous murderer in the Bugti tribe?' I'd been asked, and had then been introduced to a slightly self-conscious Mohammed Mondrani of Mut; Mondrani was his clan, Mut his paro or sub-clan, the family unit.

Sui natural gas field was in Kalpar territory, but part of this was hotly disputed by the neighbouring and less powerful Mondranis. All the clans were ready for a fight at all times, if not with their neighbours, then with each other, but the Kalpars and Mondranis, living as they did on the borders of Sind and the Punjab, were particularly notorious for their raids on horseback into these border provinces.

So independent and comparatively isolated are the various clans that ordinary tribesmen rarely intermingle except to celebrate the proclamation of a new Chieftain, his marriage or the birth of his first son. And I was to find, when I questioned Mohammed Mondrani about other clans, particularly the more distant sections, that my bodyguard was full of wonderful tales of hearsay but had never actually visited their territories himself.

For each clan jealously guards its own borders; every area has been fought for in the past, or bestowed by the Chieftain in return for some unusually heroic deed, and any encroachment by members of other clans, however innocent, usually leads to bloodshed. Hence, whenever Mohammed Mondrani accompanied me to a remote part of the Bugti tribal area, there'd be a great discussion as to whether he could take his arms with him. When visiting the fierce Masoris, for instance, he was only permitted to come with me providing he was unarmed – however, on that occasion I had the personal protection of the Chieftain's own brother.

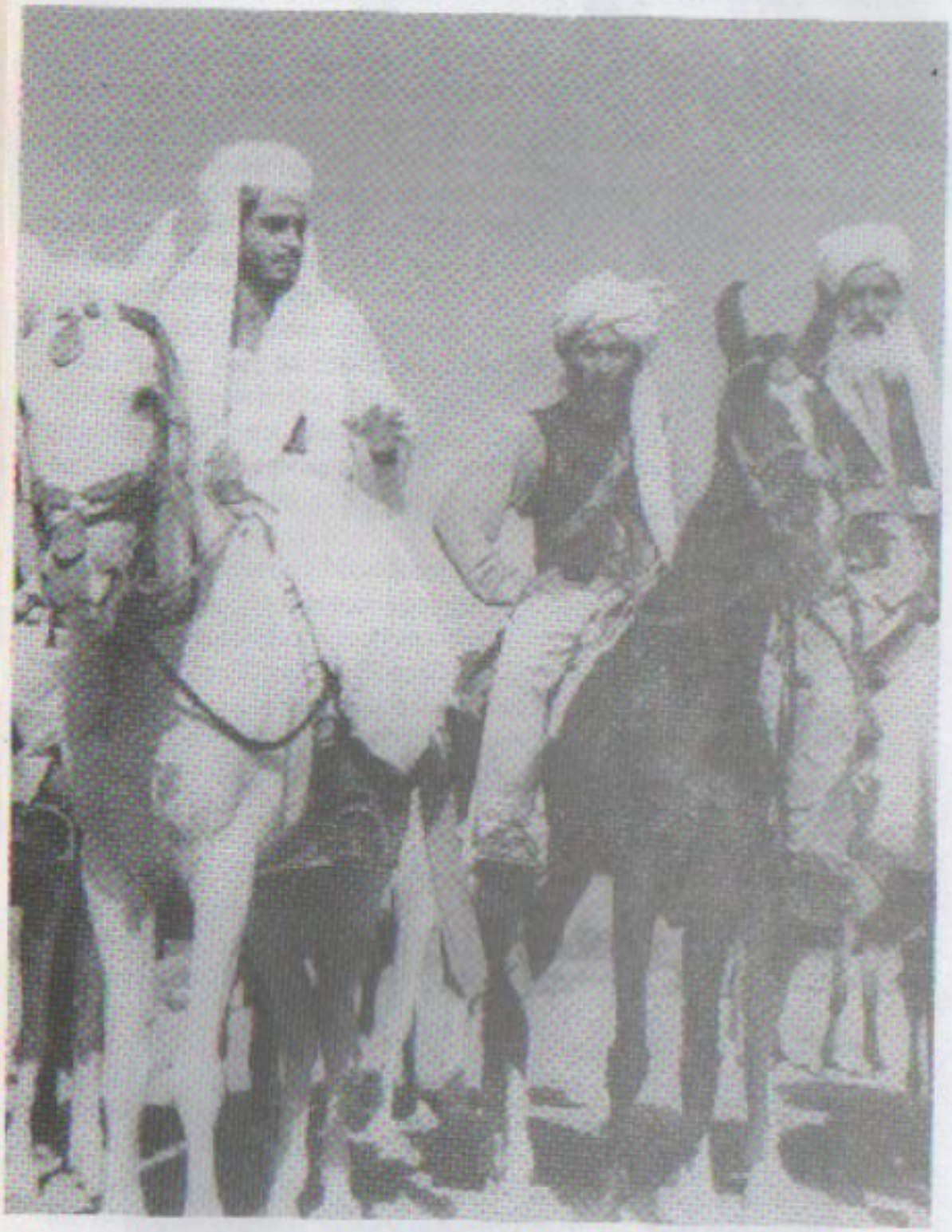
While Mohammed Mondrani of Mut had certainly indulged in more than his fair share of killings, it was a slight exaggeration to describe him as a notorious murderer, although he did nothing to discourage or contradict this statement. On the contrary he basked in the glory of being pointed out to all newcomers as a highly dangerous character. In reality, few Bugtis manage to get through life without killing somebody at some time, and it so happened that Mohammed had a quicker temper than most and seemed to get into more arguments which usually turned out to be fatal for the other chap. For perhaps more than anywhere else in the world, not excepting the North-West Frontier, this Bugti-Marri area is one where the honour of the family name demands almost incessant and ruthless blood-feuds that continue through generations, often until an entire family or families have been wiped out.

It seemed logical for so doughty a warrior to be enlisted as my personal bodyguard whenever I travelled outside the gas field boundaries and it wasn't long before I came to be regarded as a member of Mohammed's own family.

Mohammed Mondrani wasn't very tall or well-built but with his deeply-lined face that could quickly contort with passionate anger, his curiously light-brown, honey-coloured eyes, long ringlets, well-greased with sheep-fat, carelessly escaping from

Mohammed Mondrani's chief wife, with son Sher and baby Gran Bibi in cradle. (This was the first photograph ever taken of a Bugti woman)

The author, bareheaded, with Mohammed Mondrani's two wives, Mohammed with ringlets over his shoulders, his son and kinsmen



Sardar Ahmad Nawaz Bugti (left) with Massori and Jaffrani waderas at Pirkawagh

the folds of his bulky white turban, his carefully curled beard and spiked moustaches which he tended like a dandy, and always a gun or a sword at his hand, he was quite a formidable figure.

He wore the usual loose, wide-sleeved shirt called a chola, with very baggy trousers narrowing at the ankle, called shalwar in the Punjab, but kanavez by the Bugtis (whose version sometimes contained as much as twenty or more yards of material), and a long, folded shawl – the pushti – draped round his shoulders. This pushti, like the Highlander's tartan, only more so, is the most versatile piece of cloth you can imagine. It keeps you warm in cold weather or in the chill of the desert night; wrapped round your face, it keeps out dust and sand; draped over a gun stuck in the ground, it forms a little tent to shelter you from the sun; folded into a pad it makes a cushion to soften the jagged rocks, or a pillow or a sheet. Spread out on the ground it serves as a prayer-mat for those Bugtis pious enough to observe the five daily prayer-times (most of them think it quite sufficient if their Chieftain prays on their behalf!), and wrapped round the forearm, it protects the arm during a fight.

When a Bugti expects to have to sit for a long time, as when attending a jirga trial or some other ceremony, he makes himself a very comfortable 'rocking-chair' with his pushti by folding it into a long strip, sitting on the ground with his knees drawn up and twisting the pushti under his armpits, around his back, then crossing the ends in front across his stomach and twisting them round his shins in a figure eight, tying the ends. Thus his back is supported and he can sit comfortably for hours.

The tribal dress is completed with the finely-smocked kirta, a full-skirted cotton overcoat with hundreds of gathers falling from the yoke, but this is becoming rare to see now that ready-made garments and cast-off European clothing becomes available in the bazaars, and Mohammed took to wearing old pullovers and even, to my horror, a woman's green overcoat, much too narrow across the shoulders.

Feet were usually bare or thrust into curved, pointed-toed leather slippers called jittees. Poorer Bugtis wore sawaz, sandals made from the woven leaves of the dwarf palm called peesh.

Under the putka or turban a small topi cap of red material, shaped rather like a Dutch bonnet and heavily embroidered with

inset pieces of mirror, was often worn at an angle to show one corner among the turban-folds, or sometimes worn alone without the turban.

With the exception of the red cap all Bugti robes are by tradition white only, and this was one of the reasons why the British Army failed to attract these warriors as recruits. They refused both to change their traditional costume, or to cut their hair or beards.

Meanwhile, I made quite a few trips with Mohammed and began to appreciate his virtues; he was a delightful companion, inclined perhaps to be possessive, but he did allow me to photograph his women-folk, providing no other Bugtis were around, whereas I was never able to take this liberty with any other Bugti women. Before long he brought his eldest son Taj to our bungalow, presenting him to us as our son from henceforth, and as for me, he began to talk of me as an honorary member of his family, and to give me the freedom of his several nomadic homes.

Like the renowned English soldier, John Jacob, who had lived and died among the tribesmen of this area a century ago, Mohammed stuttered badly, especially when he was excited, and this was a matter for some good-natured leg-pulling by his brothers who didn't suffer from this impediment, although all Mohammed's sons did to a certain extent.

Mohammed was also a notable tracker, able to identify a man from his bare footprints. He often tracked down thieves who found the gas field an irresistible temptation, making off with all kinds of loot from telephone cables to empty gasolene tins, a great deal of which was recovered by the energetic Mohammed. Sometimes he found himself tracking down human loot as when Nawab Akbar Khan sent him off to follow the trail of an abducted Bugti woman. Mohammed trailed the party all the way across the desert to Jacobabad (named after the famous John Jacob, although Bugtis still use its earlier, original name of Khangarh even today). It was a trail of some eighty miles or so and he not only followed it unerringly, but discovered where the girl was being held captive, bided his time for a couple of nights and then, having thoroughly reconnoitred the house and its surroundings, he broke in, rescued the damsel and single-handed took her back safely to Dera Bugti.

He was rather coy when it came to counting the number of men he himself had slaughtered but he did once take off his shirt to show me the numerous deep scars on his body, mementoes of various hand-to-hand sword fights.

Few of the gas field employees and their families seemed to find the desert attractive; few bothered to leave the field area except for shopping expeditions to Karachi and Quetta. But for me the tribe and their desert home was a magnet and I soon began to receive almost more invitations than I could accept, to weddings, jirgas and betrothals, usually delivered at the back door by some dusty, travel-stained character leading his camel or his crescent-eared pony. Or even more often, a sturdy foot-slogger, for the tribe as a whole was a poor one, and horses and camels a luxury. Once a week, two Mrattas walked with a load of mail some forty miles from Dera Bugti to Sui, collected the incoming mail and walked back again, leaving Dera at about three in the morning and arriving at Sui about eight a.m. They stayed in the gas field all day and walked back again in the cool of the night. Eighty miles in one day is not bad going by anyone's reckoning, and until the coming of the natural-gas company, they had been walking a further thirty-five miles on to Kashmor and back again!

'Surely they could use a horse?' I asked once, and Sardar Ahmad Nawaz, the Chieftain's younger brother who had been telling me about them, looked at me with an amused smile.

'They're only slaves,' he explained. 'They're used to it. Why on earth waste good horses when they can just as easily walk?'

Not that Sardar Ahmad Nawaz was callous, but after all, this was the custom and the Mrattas didn't complain, so why should I? However, as time went by, the mail was delivered by jeep or truck taking other goods to tribal headquarters, although for special deliveries the pedestrian Mrattas still performed the journey across country.

Mohammed Mondrani's family was reasonably well off, with several horses and camels shared between the uncles, brothers and cousins that made up the paro. The first time I visited his home I had an easy journey for he had made camp on the outskirts of the gas field, near one of the water taps specially placed by the Company for the use of the Bugtis. This had been done after finding the tribesmen banging the joints in the above-ground pipes that brought the drinking-water some forty miles across the

desert from the pumping station on the banks of the River Indus. Many times during my first year in Sui I would pass small family-groups crouched by the roadside, the women holding a brass bowl under the pipe, while the men banged away at it until the water began trickling out. Their argument, when reprimanded by Company officials, was that the water was rightfully theirs despite the fact that until it had been brought from the Indus, Sui and its surroundings had been utterly waterless.

Mohammed's summer camps consisted of kirris, simple shelters of peesh mats draped over a few forked branches, with a ridge-pole laid across the forks. More peesh mats were laid on the ground, and as he began to earn money from his watchman's job with the Company, such luxuries as charpoy string-beds, pieces of corrugated-iron weighted down with stones to form a good roof, and obviously part of what Mohammed regarded as his legitimate pickings, added to the more permanent aspects of the place. There were usually three or four of these kirris housing not only Mohammed and his chief wife, Nazdi, with her four or five children, added to each year, but other lesser wives and their offspring, Mohammed's old mother, his brothers and their wives and various odd hangers-on whose identity I was never very sure of.

Nazdi was squint-eyed and hollow-cheeked, a gaunt woman suffering from tuberculosis. A large gold ring the size of a bangle was fixed in her left nostril, the weight of it taken by a gold chain looped up round her ear. The edges of her ears were pierced and threaded with a dozen or more small silver rings, and her hair, greased with the fat from the tails of dumba sheep, was covered with a red shawl called a sirree. With her bad teeth and gaunt features she looked about sixty and was probably no more than thirty.

Mohammed was always very vague about the number of wives he actually had, although he did once coyly admit to having a girl-friend.

I had been spending the morning with Nazdi, admiring the latest minute baby with its head, like all the others, flattened at the back because of the tightly-bound swaddling-clothes tied round it and fastened with strips of cloth loosened only twice a day, so that the baby lay mutely on its back. Children are kept in these bandages for twelve months, so that they will grow up with straight

limbs. Apart from their flattened heads, they seemed to be none the worse for the experience.

I was examining a harteer – a saddle-bag woven by Mohammed's mother on a primitive kharghar loom, when a fiercely-bearded man of about fifty arrived on a camel and was introduced to me as Mohammed's half-brother. 'By the first wife of my father; I am the son of my father's second wife,' he explained.

There were various cousin-brothers as well as full brother, Khuda Bux, a burly, round-faced man acknowledged as one of the foremost local troubadours, singer of the high pitched, nasal songs of epic battles and tragic love stories, called dastanaghs.

Khuda Bux now drew me aside behind the kirri. 'Mohammed wishes that you also greet his special friend, she is not here but we can go to see her with him,' he told me mysteriously.

Having got his brother to break this news, Mohammed sidled up looking rather sheepish and soon we'd left the camp behind and ridden out three or four miles across the low sand-hills to a solitary blanket tent, the gidan, 'home of one's heart', very like the black Bedouin tents. It was a desolate, isolated little camp with only one fat-tailed sheep and a scruffy-looking boy clinging to the dusty red skirts of a woman who was probably in her early twenties.

'Yeh hamara dil ka dost,' explained Mohammed, taking me into the gidan with its peesh mats on the ground and bundles wrapped in striped blankets round the walls. 'The friend of my heart' – a delightful way of putting it. Why hadn't he married her, I wondered. Many Baluchis made no secret of having far more than their allotted four wives. The former Khan of Kalat, then ruler of the largest princely State in Baluchistan but later deposed by the Pakistan Government in favour of his eldest son, Prince Daud, told me of one old chieftain in his State who openly flaunted ten wives. When the Khan visited him he secreted six of the wives out of sight, mainly because the Khan teased him on his presumed virility and ability to cope with the demands of ten legal wives, rather that any feelings of guilt.

The 'friend of my heart' was stitching away at a piece of embroidery, setting small circles of mirror into orange and red designs embroidered on oblongs of cotton material that would later be *appliquéd* on to the yoke of the heavy cotton pushk dress worn by the women. When the dress itself wears out the

embroidery is removed and stitched on to a new garment. Bold circles and squares make up the designs which vary slightly according to clan and tribe.

Tribal dress among the Bugtis has remained unchanged through centuries but the women indulge in a certain amount of colour. The loose-fitting, wide-sleeved, calf-length pushk with its embroidery round the yoke and sleeves and a centre-slit at the neck, tops the baggy trousers which can be either white or of some reddish material. Virgins and widows generally wear white pushks without the arrow-shaped embroidery stitched to just below the breasts, that forms a long pocket on the red dresses of married women. A shawl is draped over the head, the ends often trailing in the dust – in the Punjab this is called a doputta; the Bugtis call it a sirree and prefer it to be red or of a red-patterned material. Generally speaking the women go barefoot but always wear plenty of bracelets, (thawkh) and silver anklets, (pai-zeb), with many small silver ear-rings piercing the edges of the ears and called dur. Married women on special occasions wear a nose-ring known as a pulloh, usually a bracelet-sized gold circlet studded with a ruby and supported by a gold chain or woollen thread to the top of one ear. The hair is divided by a front parting, heavily greased with sheep-fat and plaited in two braids sometimes lengthened by adding long hanks of black wool and sometimes divided into many small, thin plaits.

In the early days of tribal society, women enjoyed a tremendous amount of liberty. When the Rinds, from whom the Bugtis are descended, were at their most powerful in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, women took an active part in warfare, even commanding troops and attending the gatherings of noble families. The women-folk of the leading Khans of Kalat, whom the Bugtis and Marris acknowledged as their liege lords, although these feudatory vassals rarely paid the tribute due, were noted for their activities in politics and warfare; segregation of the sexes is in fact fairly recent, probably introduced since the gradual opening up of the country to strangers.

In warfare it was the women who were responsible for supplying ammunition, preparing plenty of food and looking after the wounded. Even today in modern Iran-Baluchistan, women still fight together with their outlawed men-folk.

Among the Bugtis, however, it has always been a matter of

honour that war should not be made upon women, children or Hindus. Boys not yet in trousers are counted as children and so you see most boys under the age of seven or eight, dressed in the calf-length chola.

Women in the Bugti-Marri country are expected to undertake all the farm-work in those rare corners where a little cultivation is possible, although the men do the ploughing. Women rear and water the cattle and, when the men are away, also prepare and serve meat and curry to guests, a job that the men normally take over so that the women can remain unseen by strangers.

Bugtis seldom marry outside the tribe or even outside the clan. And as a race, they are renowned for their obedience to their Chieftain whose slightest command is obeyed unquestioningly and who possesses immense personal power. Their hospitality and generosity towards strangers, their personal endurance and bravery in battle are other characteristics that have made the Bugti tribe a warrior race to be reckoned with.

Most of their battles are fought over the scarce water-supplies, pasturage which is equally scarce, and women who are also in short supply. We wandered back to the camp by the water tap where the portable wooden loom had been set up under a scanty patch of shade afforded by a peesh mat propped up on a stick.

Mohammed's old, half-blind mother was using natural goat and sheep's wool on the loom, while Nazdi sat in the shade spinning the wool on a dee, the primitive hand-spindle found all over the east and no doubt in primitive pockets of Celtic tribal society too. The old lady pressed the woollen threads tightly with a dup which was simply a goat's hoof into which half a dozen nails had been hammered. A pattern of dusty red stripes was formed by wool dyed with red earth called muq, and this, mingled with the natural black, white and cream of the wool formed a delightful combination which would later be stitched into bags for carrying grain.

Although Mohammed was apparently well ensconced in this camp by the water tap, the chances were that if I came back the next day, all traces of the mena would have vanished, save for the ashes of the cooking-fires. In winter-time the camp would remain a little longer, water was more plentiful outside the gas field area of piped supplies, and the winter shelters were formed of a framework of wicker stuffed with dried brush and mud and known as jubbris or juggis.

I left the women sitting in the hot sun working away, while Mohammed smoked a hookah in the shade and called out that I must certainly make sure I attended the wedding of his nephew Putto, for whom the harteer bags were being woven.

And promising that I would be there, I picked my way through the babies and chickens littering the ground, back towards my air-conditioned bungalow in the gas field camp.

3 *The Road to Dera Bugti*

'Let us meet on the bare desert foothills,
And have our interview on the barren plain,
The grazing-ground of wild asses. . . .'
(Gwarhaam to Mir Chakur. Popular Poetry of the Baloches)

Not until the end of March 1957 was I able to take up that rain check issued so casually eleven years previously, and find myself at long last on the road to Dera Bugti.

It *was* a road of sorts, a camel-track widened here and there, with the worst of the rocks removed where it ran over mountain ranges, and it had been fashioned by the present chieftain's father, Mehrab Khan, when he bought his first car in 1927. Even so, I had to close my eyes in one or two places, cling on to the sides of the jeep, and pray. How anyone managed to drive an ordinary two-wheel-drive car along the route was always a mystery to me.

It was just forty-four miles to the tribal headquarters, and we reckoned to take between two and a half to three hours on the trip. It's true that this included stops for refreshment, carried in the back of the jeep, and to stretch our legs after a particularly bad piece of road, but when I went back to Sui at the beginning of 1965 it was to find a new, shorter road leading straight over the hills, built by the Pakistan Army, complete with a fine, important-looking signpost on the edge of the gas field itself, and the journey cut to an easy one hour. But at that time this was an Army-occupied area, virtually closed to all civilians.

I was to get to know the old Dera Bugti track well but the first journey seemed endless and took me through a strange, excitingly weird country, redolent of ancient legends, ambushes and battles. The Chieftain spent little time in his tribal area, although his family stayed in Dera Bugti for all but the very hottest months when they moved up to Quetta. Akbar Khan was in Dera Bugti

now, however, and so I had set off with Mohammed Mondrani as my guide.

The first twenty miles took an hour and a quarter as we crossed the flat sandy plain towards the Zin range, almost imperceptibly entering the wide, many-mouthed Heran nullah. This was an apparently dried-up river-bed, the surface in places a smooth sandy highway, in others a patchwork mosaic of sun-baked mud called pat, cracked into curling petals. Yet, for all its arid appearance, there was water below the surface as I could see from the many chass or water-holes dug by wandering Bugtis.

The Heran nullah had the reputation of being a death-trap to these nomads for it seemed they rarely learned by experience and in order to save themselves the effort of walking half a mile or so to a water-hole, they would camp in the river-bed itself. For most of the year this would be safe enough, but when a sudden storm broke in the surrounding hills, the nullah and its high banks would become a canal for the fiercely-moving wall of water surging from the hills in a matter of minutes, and many an encampment has been completely obliterated before its occupants could run to safety.

Once in the nullahs away from the eroded, crevassed desert, you could fairly whizz along the flat sandy surface providing you had a reliable guide, for the river-bed, sometimes half a mile or more in width, split into many twisting offshoots making it extremely difficult to determine the main track, and changing all the time as wind and the occasional torrents from rainstorms in the hills, shifted the course of the river. Even the Bugti guides went astray at times, especially after dark and when, in later years, several Bugti contractors working on the gas field, drove their ancient trucks up and down the nullahs seeking gravel for construction work, leaving a bewildering confusion of tyre tracks leading nowhere in particular. Since the custom was to follow your own tyre tracks back home, this often led to utter confusion when crossing a wide section of the nullah at night.

Here and there in the broad nullah, fringed with feathery tamarisks and clumps of oleanders betraying the unseen presence of water, groups of Bugtis gathered twigs and branches for the evening fire or hauled water from the depths of a chass for the waiting cattle.

Once again we began climbing, skirting the bigger rocks and

winding up the narrow pass of Sher Posh Tank; 'tank' means 'a narrow place' and this one was a long slit between the limestone hills that separated Sui from the northern part of Bugti territory. Here the sandstone formation topping the cliffs had weathered into startlingly realistic crenellations looking for all the world like man-made battlements and castles. Enormous sections of rock had fallen from the cliffs, almost blocking the track at times, two of them balanced perilously one atop the other as though about to fall at the slightest touch.

We were driving slowly through this narrow, gloomy pass, when Mohammed Mondrani, crouching in the back with the tail of his turban wrapped round the lower part of his face to keep out the sand, called to the driver to stop, urging us towards a massive pile-up of tumbled rocks.

'Yeh Waj Kila,' he announced with an air of triumph as he unwound his turban tail and scrambled down. We followed Mohammed as he picked his way over and around the rocks, bending low at times until we were right inside the cliff in a series of natural caverns. We came out into the last of these to discover it full of light, airy and ventilated by a hole in the roof from which poured a steady trickle of water.

'Water is good,' announced Mohammed (his Urdu was just about as good as mine, which says little, but between us we managed to make ourselves understood), and he scooped up a handful of liquid to prove his point, sucking at it noisily.

It *was* good, icy-cold and clear and in the searing desert – it was only March but the temperature was already round about 115°F in the shade – it was deliciously welcome.

A famous Bugti called Waj, had used this made-to-order hideout as an ambush for travellers on the one and only track into Dera Bugti from the south, and had made it his fortress. Later we enjoyed many picnics in the caves, but now we scrambled back to the vehicle and drove out of the pass to see the distinctive geological formation of the cliff walls that had first given exploring geologists the clue to the presence of the Sui Gas Dome.

It was with a sense of relief that we emerged from that forbidding dark pass, crossed a stream and then climbed again to a high plateau, the Dasht-i-Ghoran, 'the plain of wild asses' although it must be over half a century since the wild ass – or even the wild horse, perhaps a better translation – was last seen here.

I paused to look back. On either side of the pass the cliffs formed a spectacular, appetizing-looking barrier, and I counted more than twenty different hands of colour in the layers ranging from deep rich chocolate at the base of the cliffs, with a pale honey followed by thin layers of cinnamon, strawberry-pink, sand, lime-green, lemon-yellow sandstone, then orange topped with the fantastic darker red sandstone battlements, all of it looking like some dramatic but improbable backdrop to an epic film.

In front of us stretched a wide plain, treeless and apparently waterless, yet after I had made the trip at least a dozen times, Mohammed revealed that if we had followed the nullah round to the left at the foot of the cliffs, instead of climbing up again to the plateau, we would have come to a sloping mass of limestone called Truk, pitted with deep rain-water holes – khumbs, that were invisible even from a few yards distance. All year round the khumbs are full of clear, pure, cold drinking water. But this information was withheld until I'd been fully accepted as a member of the tribe and of Mohammed's own family. Then he revealed various prehistoric cave paintings and settlements that were kept a closely guarded secret from all outsiders in the conviction that they all contained treasure buried by some long-forgotten ruler.

Ahead of us now we saw a rapidly approaching cloud of sand that soon resolved itself into a small red jeep tearing across the desert, rocketing and bouncing like a mettlesome horse. As it ground to a sudden stop a few yards ahead, Mohammed shouted excitedly,

'Nawab Sahib hai – Akbar, Akbar Nawab!' and rushed forward to prostrate himself at the dusty feet of the Chieftain as he eased his long legs from the driver's seat.

In tartan shirt, faded blue jeans and battered felt hat, it was indeed the Chieftain, his scarlet jeep crammed full of armed tribesmen, their weapons pointing perilously at each other's heads and backs, all of them wearing full beards, long ringlets and tribal dress.

By contrast Akbar Khan's beard was a neatly trimmed frame to his chin, his moustache curled with spiked, Dali-ish upturned points, his hair cut quite short.

'Terribly sorry,' he apologized, leaning on our jeep to greet me. 'I expected you a couple of hours ago and now I've got to rush to Rojan to join the Mazari chieftain who is attending a jirga trial. But I've made all the arrangements for you – my family is waiting, the servants are preparing food and I hope that soon you'll come and spend a week-end with us', he added.

I had brought my tape-recorder with me, and it was still a great novelty; Mohammed began to tell the Chieftain about some of the recordings I had been making at his encampment in Sui.

'This I must hear,' laughed Akbar Bugti, so I lugged the cumbersome L.2 out of the jeep and played back a short excerpt from one of the epic ballads. What a boon the modern, pocket-sized transistor tape-recorder would have been to me then instead of the twenty pounds odd weight I had to hump around with me! All the same, the recital undoubtedly impressed the occupants of the Chieftain's jeep and I took the opportunity of asking if there were any musicians in Dera Bugti whom I could record during my visit.

'Well, there *are* musicians, of course, but today you'll be unlucky – they'll all be out in the fields serenading the harvesters,' he explained.

Perhaps I would get some photographs as well as recordings, I thought, and hoped for the best as I watched the scarlet jeep bounce towards Sher Posh Tank while we continued our more sedate pace northwards.

Three Bugtis rode by on their sturdy, unshod ponies with the peculiar, crescent-shaped ears that are a characteristic of these wonderfully hardy animals with their Arab blood. They are watered and fed only once a day, eat mainly raw meat and can keep up their single-foot trot for hour after hour over mountain-tracks and across the desert.

Their riders sat on picturesque but extremely uncomfortable Bugti saddles of wood, covered with roughly-tanned skins studded with nails and spikes from which dangled all kinds of odd weapons, leather water-skins and bundles, the whole topped with turquoise saddle-cloths. Their guns were slung over their shoulders and as we passed, Mohammed stuck his head out of the jeep to shout out the traditional Hal, exchanging news that kept the widely scattered tribesmen remarkably well-informed.

The second range of hills that barred us from the long narrow valley known variously as Shamsher, Siahaf or Chhattar, began to take form as we bounced over the plain, past long-forgotten

graveyards of unmarked mounds of white stones. Naming places correctly in Baluchistan is almost impossible since many have the same names as well as several alternatives while towns that have been renamed by the British are still invariably known by their old titles among the tribesmen. The tribal headquarters of Dera Bugti also known as Dera Bibrak, lay in the Chhattar Valley as I shall call it, though the official Pakistan Government maps of this area are remarkably blank save for a magnificent scarlet line claiming to be a main road – actually the non-existent track we were on now – though finally to be constructed some eight or nine years later.

We wound through another twisting pass for some three miles; narrow with very steep sides and in places no more than a camel-track, this was called the 'Mundo' – Lame – and was an eerie place with here and there a tiny opening where a sandy cove skirted a stream with a tamarisk tree or two, followed by another steep climb up the rocky cliff-side. The whole place provided an endless succession of perfect places for an ambush. Once, driving through here with Ahmad Nawaz Bugti, he told me how his half-brother Abdul Rahman, who was born in 1903 of a Mratta concubine, had in fact lain in wait for his father in a similar pass a little farther on, the Mir Chakur Juddo Push. But forewarned, Nawab Mehrab Khan had stayed where he was in Quetta until Abdul Rahman ran out of food, was arrested and sent to jail in Rajanpur. 'But that didn't stop his intrigues – he went to live in Sind after he was released, but he still plots trouble for my brother even now,' Ahmad Nawaz added.

We reached a particularly realistic outcrop, for all the world as though some sculptor had fashioned a Turk's head complete with shovel-beard and fez, and then, there before us was the first glimpse of the fertile, well-guarded valley sheltering Dera Bugti. Immediately opposite rose an escarpment some hundreds of feet high, the sides sloping steeply back and smoothly sliced as though by a knife. The Bugti name, 'Par', was strikingly appropriate, meaning 'wings', and they stretched protectively along the valley. Ripened wheat and corn was being harvested though there were no signs of the musicians as we drove across the chhaltar, turned west and continued through fields, over small streams and water-channels until the track turned as though to disappear into the steep rocky face of the range. We were in a tiny, narrow valley

with a rippling stream separating us from a long wall of smoothly rounded white limestones enclosing an unexpected mass of green trees whose branches beckoned invitingly. The brook scampered down from the cliffs and I felt a poke in my back as the sliding glass partition opened and Mohammed's gun jabbed at my shoulder-blades.

'That is road to Kahan, to Marri country,' he explained, 'and there' – pointing to a couple of date palms clinging to a minute terrace of earth at the foot of the escarpment, – 'there is the grave of our saint, Pir Chhattar, and there also is the birth of the river (grandiose title!), the Chhattar.'

We drove to the edge of the 'river', got out and cautiously stepped across on the flat, slippery stones to a spot a few yards farther up the slope where the stream bubbled out of the ground cutting a deep path, cool and green with weeds and noisy frogs.

Two men sat on the edge of the stream, washing their dusty feet, and Mohammed told me that travellers traditionally paused at this point to wash and smarten themselves up before continuing the last mile or so to the walls of Dera Bugti.

The Tank, or pass to the Marav Valley and on to the Marri country, was deep and steep-sided, very narrow and in places barely wide enough for a jeep to squeeze through. I didn't go right through it on this occasion but later on, when I was driving to a distant part of Bugti territory with Sardar Ahmad Nawaz Bugti, we paused while he told me how Pir Chhattar had thrown himself from the top of the high rocky cliff to fall at the spot where the stream now bubbled out of the ground.

'They say that the Pir had been travelling with two of his relatives for many days without water, and they were all dying of hunger and thirst. He had prayed to Allah for guidance and help and had been promised that if he sacrificed his own life, his relatives would be saved, but first he had to make a vow that his family would settle here and that they would never allow any drugs or narcotics to be grown in the valley. That's why you'll never find poppies nor tobacco in our valley,' Ahmad Nawaz explained, 'although it could be very profitable for us. This is the most fertile part of our land – of course, they do grow opium poppies in other parts,' he added. 'Over there,' pointing to the clump of date-palms by the white stones of the grave, 'is where the saint is buried and my brother makes an annual allowance to the Pir's

descendants, about thirty of them now. They get all the first fruits of the harvests, too.'

The shrine is a delightful little oasis, reached by negotiating the fallen trunk of a date-palm placed across the stream as it flows between steep banks. The grave itself is surrounded by a low wall of the white stones that mark the tombs of important personages, and suspended from branches over the head of the grave are pieces of white cloth placed there as prayer-flags by supplicants at the grave, together with two or three sheep bells. 'If you hear the bells ringing it means that Pir Chhattar is rising from his grave,' Ahmad Nawaz told me, 'but I think they only ring rarely, when we have a fierce storm, because this place is very sheltered.'

In the narrow confines of the pass itself I gazed at the steep overhang of the cliff as Ahmad Nawaz pointed out a series of small white stones resting on narrow ledges of rock at intervals all the way up to the top of the cliff. Mohammed Mondrani, as usual, was with me, and he demonstrated how, in the 1930s, a slave had gained his freedom as the result of a bet his master had made.

The cliff had been regarded as completely unscalable but the Mratta slave, hearing his master discussing this with a friend, offered to prove that it could be climbed. The slave took a pocket full of pebbles with him and left one or two on the cliff face as he climbed, marking his path to make his descent easier. Showing me how it was done, Mohammed managed to climb the first thirty feet with agility and then he gave up and came down with a rush. But when the slave reached the overhang near the top of the cliff he needed both his hands for climbing and gave up marking his path with the pebbles. Even then, he found himself stuck, hanging perilously with feet dangling and arms straining from their sockets, over sharp-edged rocks hundreds of feet below.

More often than not the relationship between master and slave is an intimate one, the slave being treated very much as one of the family (except when it comes to the women-folk, then it becomes a one-sided affair with the master entitled to take his pick of any Mratta woman). At all events, it was obvious that this particular master thought a great deal of his slave for he spread his pushti shawl on the ground and prayed to Allah to save the man, offering to sacrifice a fat-tailed dumba sheep and swearing that should the slave reach safety, he would set him free.

The seemingly impossible was achieved, the man reached the summit and became one of the few slaves in Bugti history to be granted his freedom before 1948.

Now we picked our way carefully to our vehicle the other side of the Chhattar stream and bumped down the path along by the wall of white stones. At the end of the wall the little side valley opened out into the main valley; a pair of high wooden gates stood open in the wall while a middle-aged man in a grubby, off-white turban pottered about just inside as though awaiting our arrival.

As we drove slowly along, he beckoned to us eagerly and we stopped. 'This is the Nawab's own summer-house, this is his garden,' Mohammed breathed over my shoulder, and the awe in his voice was soon echoed in my own as we drove into an oasis of greenery, along a path darkened with the pleasant shade of leafy branches meeting overhead.

To find such a lush garden in this arid desert, with fruit trees – guavas, pomegranates, dates, mulberries and a few rose-bushes in between – was to taste the pleasures of paradise. There was a distinct drop in temperature, a delicious perfume of growing plants and flowers and, above all, the smell of water.

I never appreciated the distinctive smell of water until I'd been driving in the Bugti desert for some hours, in exceptionally dry and blazingly hot weather. Then, leaning out of the land-rover, I'd sniffed the air and actually scented water. I'd turned to Mohammed excitedly and asked him if indeed there was water in the vicinity and he'd grinned an affirmative. And, sure enough, ten minutes or so later, we came upon a pool in the nullah-bed.

Once you've had the scent of water in the middle of a dried-up desert land, you can never forget it.

Here in the Nawab's garden, the Chhattar stream had been diverted to flow under the stone wall and through the garden before resuming its course at the bottom of the slope, in the valley proper. In the upper part of the garden a huge manhir had been built. This was a sophisticated version of the ordinary, open-sided Bugti shelter made of tree-trunks supporting a roof of reeds and mud, a design that seemed to have derived from the nomadic goat-skin tents seen all over the Middle East.

The Chieftain, however, had made a concrete floor to his

manhir, and supplemented stout tree-trunks with concrete pillars. A channel had been cut through the floor for the stream to flow right under the thatched roof, while it then tumbled into a concrete pool specially constructed for the Nawab's children.

When in use, the floor would be spread with fine Persian rugs and bolsters, minstrels would play in the shade of the surrounding trees and slaves would bring relays of food and drink. With the gurgle of water running alongside, and the softly-scented air from the cool garden, this somewhat nondescript shelter was transformed into an enchanting, magic oasis.

The gardener, however, wasn't so enthusiastic as I was.

'This water,' he complained, dipping his hands into the stream and allowing the droplets to dribble through his fingers, '—this water is full of oil. It stops the flowers growing and everyone in Dera Bugti suffers from pains in the stomach from the drinking of it.'

Was *this* where the Company should have drilled for oil, rather than at Sui, where they'd found natural gas instead? We bent down to scoop up handfuls of the cool water. Not too bad really, but it certainly did have a faintly oily flavour.

'It is much worse higher up, by the shrine,' the mali went on. So just to be on the safe side we took a sample of the water for analysis back at the gas-field laboratories. Alas for the Bugtis' hopes, it proved to be disappointing so far as oil content was concerned.

We left the shady garden and drove out into the blaze of the sun which now seemed twice as fierce. And, of course, with our dallying it was getting quite late in the morning. But at last we could actually see the walls of Dera Bugti, twenty-foot high mud-brick battlements with round bastions every few hundred yards.

The little Chhattar stream, gathering speed now, raced downhill past a couple of flour-mills where it helped grind locally grown grain brought by tribesmen who paid so much a seer for the service, provided by the Chieftain who owned the mills. After this the stream slowed down to meander alongside the mud-brick walls of the township, providing a meeting-place for men, women and children who came here to fetch drinking-water, do their washing, bathe and water the cattle.

It had taken me eleven years to get here and the sight of the romantic walled headquarters shimmering in the heat haze, with

the backdrop of enormous, sheer-sided cliffs and a foreground of ferocious-looking, desert tribesmen, bearded, ringleted and heavily armed, set my heart pounding with anticipation and the prospect of realizing yet another long-awaited ambition.

4 *The Chieftain's Family*

'The mountains are the Baloctis' forts,
The peaks are better than an army
The lofty heights are our comrades. . . .'
Popular Poetry of the Baloches.

HUDDLED outside the mud-brick walls of Dera Bugti were the roughly-built huts of the former slave community of Mrattas.

String charpoys ranged in the scanty shade of the huts and on most of them reclined masculine figures among a scattering of chickens, mangy dogs, curly-haired goats and small, naked, runny-eyed children. Women in dusty red robes squatted on the ground grinding corn in stone querns that were almost exact replicas of those their prehistoric predecessors must have used five thousand years ago.

With nowhere to go, and no skills to offer, even had they any prospects of employment outside Bugti territory, the Mrattas continued to live in their segregated colonies. Some slaves had been bought from Arab traders who packed them into dhows at the East African seaports, and sailed them across the Indian Ocean to Muscat and Oman, and the Mekran ports of Gwadur, Pusne and Jiwani. There I've met descendants of those original Negro slaves, known as Habshis and the majority of them are still bound in slavery. True, the Khan of Kalat officially declared them freed in 1928, but outside the few towns and trading centres such decrees were largely ignored.

Rind chieftains for centuries counted their riches in slaves and would send beautiful slave-girls and beardless dancing boys as gifts to their overlords. Even today, seventy per cent of the population of Kalat is estimated to consist of peoples of slave origin. Up in the Kachha Koh range dividing Baluchistan from Iran and Afghanistan, I heard many tales of young boys captured from

passing caravans, castrated and trained to amuse their masters in this land where women are scarce and at a premium.

Most Bugti slaves, however, are descended from Mahrattas captured in battle when the Emperor Humayun fought to regain Delhi. Part of Mir Chakur's reward for helping the Emperor was some forty thousand prisoners whom the Rind chieftain distributed as slaves among his kinsmen and warriors who were to found the Bugti and Marri tribes.

Until Nawab Akbar Khan officially freed the Mrattas in 1948, these unfortunate descendants of Humayun's captives had been treated as absolute chattels. Any Bugti could take a Mratta woman at will and her husband dared not complain. Mrattas could be bought and sold like cattle. But now the Chieftain set aside a small proportion of land given by the Government to the tribe, and decreed that the Mrattas' services must be paid for. As in Kalat, Bugtis in the remoter areas ignored these decrees, but today if a Bugti seduces a Mratta women her husband is officially supposed to be able to beat up the Bugti – though not to kill him – without fear of reprisals and to claim compensation into the bargain. I was able to see such a case brought before the tribal elders when I travelled in the mountainous northern area.

Pure-blooded Bugtis still kill each other for adultery and only suffer a fine or short term of imprisonment – though probably incurring a blood-feud as a result.

The Mrattas' dwellings were clustered round the back of Dera Bugti and the two huge gateways of the town were kept clear of the ramshackle huts. The main gate opened on to the white-painted mosque standing just outside the walls by the side of the guest-house and the caravanserai. Twice a day from the steps of the mosque, Durbans (literally, 'those who serve at the door') from the Chieftain's own household stood here to summon all visitors to the meals that tradition demanded to be given freely. Every day some six hundred meals were cooked in enormous iron cauldrons in the outer courtyard of the Nawab's house, and distributed to non-residents. Similar, smaller cauldrons stood in the garden of the very westernized, comfortable guest-house provided for more sophisticated visitors, while tribal guests with their camels and horses sheltered in the open courtyard of the caravanserai the other side of the garden wall.

Apart from having to feed and shelter all strangers, the Chieftain

is also expected to meet the expenses of visiting bridegrooms marrying girls related, no matter how remotely, to the Chieftain's family. Not only this, but the Nawab also pays the bride's expenses! At the circumcision ceremony of his eldest son Salim, some eight thousand Bugtis and three hundred non-Bugtis were invited and fed with over three hundred sheep and goats *daily* besides cattle, rice, flour and sugar.

A sore point with the Bugtis is the fact that they receive no royalties from the production of natural-gas in their area. They did originally have an agreement with the British oil company concerned, but after Partition, when the gas was actually discovered and developed, royalties were paid to the Pakistan Government which claims all revenues from any minerals found more than two inches below the surface of the soil.

This situation caused a certain amount of ill-feeling in the Chieftain's family, for the tribe is one of the poorest in existence, their land being almost completely useless from the point of view of agriculture or grazing. They rely for their income almost entirely on revenues from lands bestowed on Islam Khan the Second by the British at the suggestion of the then Major John Jacob, to whom the Chieftain surrendered his sword, in 1847. With nine hundred followers and their families, old Islam Khan Bugti went off to Janadera in the Larkana district of Sind, quite near the prehistoric city of Moenjodaro, where he was given land free and in perpetuity on condition that the Bugtis settled down to a peaceful agricultural life there. It is the revenue from these lands that forms the greater part of the tribe's income today.

As we turned into the garden of the guest-house, a fine, brick-built bungalow set in a charming little oasis of green garden and trees, an elderly man with a neat white fringe of a beard hurried to greet us.

He had a gentle, kindly face and introduced himself as Monha, the Chieftain's major-domo, a former slave now entrusted with running all the external household affairs, that is, outside the harem. He led a procession of Mrattas bearing trays of food and cool drinks, with a large glass jug of ice-cool lassi, the delicious drink made from curds and chopped herbs and onions which some people refer to as 'Baluchi beer'. It's non-alcoholic and very refreshing and I gladly drank a couple of glassfuls while the old man showed me round the guest-house with its three bedrooms,

each with its own bathroom, the old-style 'thunderbox' and tin hip-bath type found in Government dak bungalows all over the East. Colourful Kismir 'scratch' work-tables, chairs and charpoy beds, made in Kashmor, a little town in Sind, furnished the bedrooms, while the sitting and dining rooms boasted electric lights and even a radio – all run off the Nawab's private generator.

'When I had it installed,' he told me later on, 'I offered free installation and electricity to anyone who wanted it in Dera Bugti, but only a few Hindu shopkeepers took advantage of this. I'm afraid most of the Bugtis still regard it as an invention of the Devil!'

A solitary electric bulb hangs over the main entrance to Dera Bugti, with one or two bulbs in the bazaar itself and apart from the guest-house and the Chieftain's own bungalow, that is all. Oil lamps and flickering fires provide most of the population with their only form of lighting.

'Begum Sahib is expecting you – I'll take you to her,' Monha told me after he'd shown me around the guest-house. So I followed him across the road and through an immense wooden gateway closed between sundown and sunrise, and suddenly I was back in the Middle Ages.

The gateway led into a short lane made dim and shady by reed mats stretched overhead. On either side open-fronted shops perched a couple of feet above ground level, providing a resting-place for the men who lolled on their home-made muzzle-loading tupaks, wild grey or black locks escaping from their enormous turbans to straggle over their shoulders. Inside the dark interiors of the shops, the Hindu shopkeepers, long since assimilated into the population and outwardly indistinguishable from the Bugtis themselves, bent over the ubiquitous ancient Singer sewing-machine or measured out handfuls of dusty grain, sugar and flour.

In the old days Hindus, while wearing the same type of garments as the Bugtis, had to wear red tunic shirts instead of white, and make the neck opening on the opposite side to that of the Bugtis', but today they wear exactly the same kind of clothing. The features, though, are usually milder and their hair is worn shorter, hidden in their turbans.

Packets of tea and salt lined the dingy shelves of the tiny cubby-hole shops and that just about constituted the entire range of goods for sale. I'd certainly seen more exotic bazaars as far as

the goods were concerned, but seldom more exotic-looking customers.

There were no women to be seen, but the men, mostly elderly, were dressed in full tribal array with their old-fashioned, finely-pleated smocked kirta overcoats, and fantastically baggy trousers and enormous turbans, just like an engraving from one of the early nineteenth-century books in my collection. To the left of the main gateway, just before entering the covered bazaar, a short passage led to another wooden gate set in an inner wall, and we stepped through this into the outer courtyard of Bugti House. Here there was an open-sided manhir where the Chieftain would sit when holding jirgas, while in one corner stood the great 'witches' cauldrons together with an outsize pair of iron scales used for weighing and cooking food for tribal guests.

We walked to an inner wall pierced by an L-shaped doorway so constructed that nobody could see straight through into the inner purdah courtyard where no men outside the family may set foot. Here I was handed over to a woman-servant with strong, handsome features – Durkhatu, wife of Monha the major-domo, and supervisor of the women's household arrangements.

In the centre of the courtyard sprawled a series of inter-connected manhirs covered with a thick mud roof. Here in hot weather, the women-folk spent most of their time, sitting on carpets spread on the ground, or lying on wooden charpoy bedsteads; a number of Mratta women and small children were dozing there now, some playing in the shade, sewing, pulling punkahs of cloth suspended from the roof to provide a breeze, or pushing a swing that hung from a tall wooden frame. One girl was busy tying a cotton bag round the hind quarters of a handsome white nanny goat that was wearing a necklace of blue beads to ward off the evil eye. Everyone stopped to watch my progress across the yard.

Outside the open-fronted kitchen quarters Mratta women husked rice, cooked over open fires or made curds using a pre-historic pot that I later dated at some four thousand years old, and a smoothly polished wooden paddle called a dazmar, stood upright in the pot and turned by pulling alternately on the ends of a narrow strip of leather tied round the shaped centre of the paddle.

A couple of women were baking kak, very thick bread made from a dough of unleavened flour and water wrapped round

smooth stones dropped into the hot ashes of a wood fire. When the bread is baked you break it away from the stones, crisp on the outside, maybe a little soggy in the middle, but very satisfying to eat.

A low, corrugated-iron roofed bungalow in one corner stood next to a brick-built house of several storeys, with a flat roof and a general air of desolation. Durkhatu pushed open the frame-door to the mosquito-netted verandah, bending swiftly to touch the feet of one of the ladies standing inside, and murmured, 'Begum Sahib . . .'

Begum Bugti was wearing a cool mint-green muslin qamis dress over white shalwar trousers with a green doputta scarf, the usual Punjabi or northern dress, a more sophisticated, tailored version of the tribal women's shapeless, tent-like garments.

She was slender and pale, quietly pretty, with a much lighter complexion than my sun-tanned one, and smiling, she led the way to a small crowded room darkened with red velvet hangings and occupied by an enormous divan bed, a couple of couches, cup-boards and hooks on the walls from which hung a solar topee, guns and a portable radio.

During my first visit the Begum was inclined to be shy, only occasionally putting a quiet question, nodding sometimes as, although she could understand English, she was unused to speaking it. It was her sister-in-law, Sirdar Bibi, who did most of the talking. The Chieftain's sister had the same strong, handsome features as her brother, tall, darker-complexioned and with a ready gay smile and an excellent command of English. As curious Mratta women servants crowded the doorways, holding babies or clutching the hands of small children, I asked Sirdar Bibi where she had learnt English.

'I had three years at a Convent school in Lahore,' she explained, 'but my sister-in-law wasn't allowed to go to school and had to learn English at home, and here we don't have much chance of practising. Can't you come and teach us?'

'Please, will you?' urged the Begum. 'You could live here with us and we could talk together.'

They sighed as I had to reject this idea, and a boy of about ten burst into the room, wearing very English schoolboy grey shorts and a white shirt.

'Come in, Salim, come and say Hallo,' urged his aunt.

'We've met already,' said the Chieftain's eldest son, throwing his airgun on the bed. We had indeed encountered each other outside the walls, where he'd been pointing his gun at birds and trying without much success, to hit one. His younger brother, four-year-old Talal, dressed also in grey shorts and white shirt, clung to Durkhatu's hand, while an even smaller sister in more conventional dress and shalwar trousers, hid behind her mother.

Salim asked where my tape-recorder was.

'I've left it at the guest-house.' I told him, and as everyone begged to see it, Durkhatu was sent to pass on a message for it to be brought over.

I had recorded several Bugti songs at Sui, and now I played some of them back while everyone tried to guess the singers' identities. Slaves or no, the Mrattas had great pride and a sense of natural dignity and were treated as members of the family here, rather than servants or inferiors. They would break into the conversation, put their viewpoints and even argue, without the slightest hesitation or sign of self-consciousness. Now they discussed the high-pitched nasal hill songs called dastanaghs; there are comparatively few Bugtis skilled at composing and singing these songs or playing the nal flute, so their individual styles and voices are fairly well known.

After a little while my audience overcame their initial awe of the machine and I asked for volunteers for a song. Subhula, a young Mratta girl with a pretty voice but terribly self-conscious, made the first attempt, but kept forgetting the words of her song. It was a traditional love song called 'Leilarila' but with a new, up-to-date twist. As she faltered, Durkhatu picked up the refrain and finished the song in her strong, tuneful voice, and then Sirdar Bibi translated for me:

'Now you are working in the camp (Sui gas field), and you
are getting fresh water from the pipes.
You are not now coming to me (to draw water for you)
So I must come to your tent at midnight.
You are working in the Cumpanee stores,
You are carrying the iron pipes,
You are rich, but my clothes are in rags.
Do not worry if you are not coming to me,
I shall come at night to you.
When I find you sleeping, I shall take you to the home of my
heart.'

A wistful, sad reflection on the emotional complications caused by progress!

I recorded a few more songs, including a question-and-answer-song by Durkhatu and Subhula, and then we trooped into the next room to have a meal.

The prison-grey paintwork and steel filing-cabinets, bare wooden cupboard and faded cretonne curtains at the windows were hardly one's idea of princely furnishings. The guest-house was, in fact, far more attractively furnished. But there was an enormous white refrigerator run off the Nawab's generator, with a large standing electric fan by the table, and these of course were real luxuries to find in the hot desert.

We ate curry and sajji, the delicious barbecued lamb cooked for hours on skewers planted between banks of special slow-burning kahir wood; mast, a kind of yoghurt eaten with meat and fruit, sweetmeats of honey and milk, and a great deal more.

Two large photographs of the Nawab looked down on us – one showed him in a European suit, but the other, very dashing, in his tribal dress including the full-skirted kirta, a huge turban with one end wound about his nose and mouth so that only his searching dark eyes could be seen, like one of the veiled Tuaregs of North Africa. Over his back the muzzle of his gun appeared, and in his belt was thrust a long, curved dagger.

He looked magnificent and I could well believe the stories I'd heard of how people would flock to see his father passing by when he rode out escorted by over a hundred fully-armed tribesmen; even those who did not know him as he rode – maybe to Jacobabad or Larkhana – could never mistake him for anyone but a tribal chieftain.

As I said good-bye, promising to come again soon, the Begum held my hand as though reluctant to release it.

'We are very lonely here, we never see anybody,' she said wistfully.

'Well, why not come and visit me in Sui?' I invited them. But the two women shook their heads with emphasis.

'Oh no – Nawab Sahib would never allow that,' they told me.

'But you will be passing through Sui on your way to Quetta,' I pointed out. They had told me they were soon to drive up to the hills for the hottest months of the summer.

They only smiled and repeated that it was quite impossible.

'I'll send all the men-servants away and you can drive right up to the gate and there'll be only other ladies there, I'll invite them specially to meet you,' I tried to tempt them.

But such a daring departure from the normal couldn't even be contemplated. Indeed, some time later when I asked Nawab Bugti himself if I could entertain his family at Sui, he was quite adamant.

I suppose I should just have accepted a refusal but they were both so obviously lonely and bored that I thought it worth while trying to convince the Chieftain they'd be completely secluded if they did come to visit me.

'After all, even those few steps from the jeep to the bungalow will be taken under cover of their bourkas,' I pointed out, for whenever they went out they wore these head-to-ankle cover-alls in black silk or cotton, with only a small embroidered grid to peep through.

'But the wind might blow up the edge of the skirt – or sometimes you know, purdah-nashin put out a hand from their bourkas – I couldn't allow the risk of any man, especially a Bugti, catching a glimpse of my wife or sister,' he assured me with an air of finality that brooked no more argument.

However, there was nothing to stop young Salim accompanying us on a tour of Dera Bugti itself. It didn't take long. There were only about three thousand people living within the walls and perhaps some six hundred outside.

We strolled through the bazaars, with a glimpse of the 'arms factory', a dark mud-hut where muzzle-loading muskets – the tupaks – were fashioned as well as beautiful replicas of modern British rifles down to the serial numbers on the barrels. Later on I learnt why they hadn't been too keen on the idea of a close examination of the weapons for in spite of (or maybe it was because of) our Bugti watchmen, quite a lot of Company material such as the narrow sections of pipe which were used in the Field as telephone-poles, together with the copper wires, disappeared overnight and seem to have turned up in the Dera Bugti weapons factory!

A couple of narrow, twisting lanes of mud-brick houses with high blank walls facing the lanes, lead us to the jail. This consisted of a large courtyard like the caravanserai, with shelters built up against the walls and some thirty or so men lounging around leading a life of apparent leisure.

Some of the men were washing their long hair under a tap in

one corner, an indication of unexpected progress, for running water was still a rarity. All of the men wore leg-irons that clanked as they moved around, and usually they picked up the long ends to prevent chafing their ankles. Most had stuffed rags between the flesh and the iron with the same idea and they all seemed superbly proud and unself-conscious as we crowded into the yard. Just outside the jail gates the warder in grey, Levy Corps uniform of shirt and baggy shalwar trousers, was chatting amiably to the owner of a small general store. The warder had taken off his turban and the embroidered cap inset with mirrors, that he wore beneath it, and was busily combing out his long hair, parted in the middle and falling to his waist.

Still caressing his ringlets he clapped on his little cap and followed us into the courtyard and with a sudden show of authority, he ordered the prisoners to line up so that I could take their photographs; the last thing I wanted of course, was a stiff line of camera-conscious prisoners, but this was a hazard I was always encountering and had to waste much film taking photographs that were posed, in order not to upset the well-intentioned helpers.

There was a great deal of laughter and joking as the men jostled into position and I asked if there was anyone who could sing or play an instrument – though I'd left the tape-recorder behind at the guest-house.

Sure enough, one man soon produced a nal flute from his shirt and a second squatted down by his side; then the two of them, rendered a nostalgic mountain song in high-pitched nasal monotones watched by the warder still primping himself and arranging his ringlets over his shoulders.

These men were in jail mainly for theft or murder. They'd all been tried by a jirga of elders and in the case of a murder had probably paid a fine in kind – cattle, guns, nubile girls, and so on, – and in addition served a short term of imprisonment, often only a few months.

They had no set prison work but if the Chieftain had a job to be done, perhaps gardening or building maintenance, prisoners would be sent along to carry it out. Otherwise they led an aimless existence, depending for their meals, like all tribal prisoners in Baluchistan, on friends or relatives sending in regular supplies.

It seemed that prisoners here were responsible for the delicious

greenness of the little guest-house garden shaded by mulberry trees and bordered by a brave show of flowers. Not very pretentious but still more than I saw in the courtyard of the Chieftain's own house, where only one or two half-dead young trees wilted in small dried-up beds dug into the hard-baked soil.

'Oh, but we do have a garden,' Sirdar Bibi had protested, and jumped up to lead the way through the back of the bungalow to a gateway in the high wall surrounding the courtyard. She and the Begum had lingered behind the door, but Durkhatu had escorted me boldly as a Mratta woman could, and together we had walked through to a long narrow plot of land planted with grass scattered with piles of camel dung and mould and with a few trees in the shade of which a prisoner was working on tomato plants.

It was hardly a spot for whiling away the hot summer hours but perhaps in time it would develop into a cool sitting out place.

To complete my Dera Bugti tour I had to see the school, the only proper school in all Bugti territory apart from the Sui gas field school for the children of employees, and the two small classes at the levy posts where mullas taught young boys how to read and write the Holy Koran. Dera School was next door to the guest-house and had been built and was supported by the Chieftain.

The headmaster demonstrated the prowess of his star pupils in the upper forms, boys who were learning English and who read to me from their textbooks. 'The black swan floating on the lake . . .' they began, and I wondered how the master managed to explain such an improbable scene to boys who had no idea of a swan nor a lake.

There were four or five classes, some held inside the mud-brick buildings, and one in the shade of a low-roofed manhir flanked by a huge mulberry tree. There were actually two small girls in this class and I was told that they came from the Chieftain's family. Anyone could in fact send girls to the school, but none of the tribesmen were daring enough to follow the example of the ruling family. 'Most of them think it's almost immoral even to dream of teaching girls,' I was told.

The children read from their Urdu books and eagerly answered questions, leaping up from the mats they used as they squatted on the ground, their slates and books on their knees. Two small boys

took advantage of the distraction we provided to start a game of jumping over a pair of large stones set at the foot of the tree.

'Those are magic stones,' the schoolmaster explained, a trifle self-consciously. 'They flew through the air following a poet and his love.'

He seemed reluctant to admit to belief in such an absurd story, but I had it later from Nawab Akbar Khan's own lips when I learnt that not so many years ago, in the time of his grandfather, Sir Shahbaz Khan, there lived a famous poet called Toakali, a member of the neighbouring Marri tribe. He was, to say the least, eccentric, and eventually earned the title of 'Must', which means mad. Toakali Must gave up composing poetry and took to wandering about the countryside.

'He became a lover, a great lover,' the Chieftain explained. 'That was his profession, just being a lover. A very dangerous profession because you know how we treat the seducers of our women!'

I did know – death on mere suspicion, for both lover and woman!

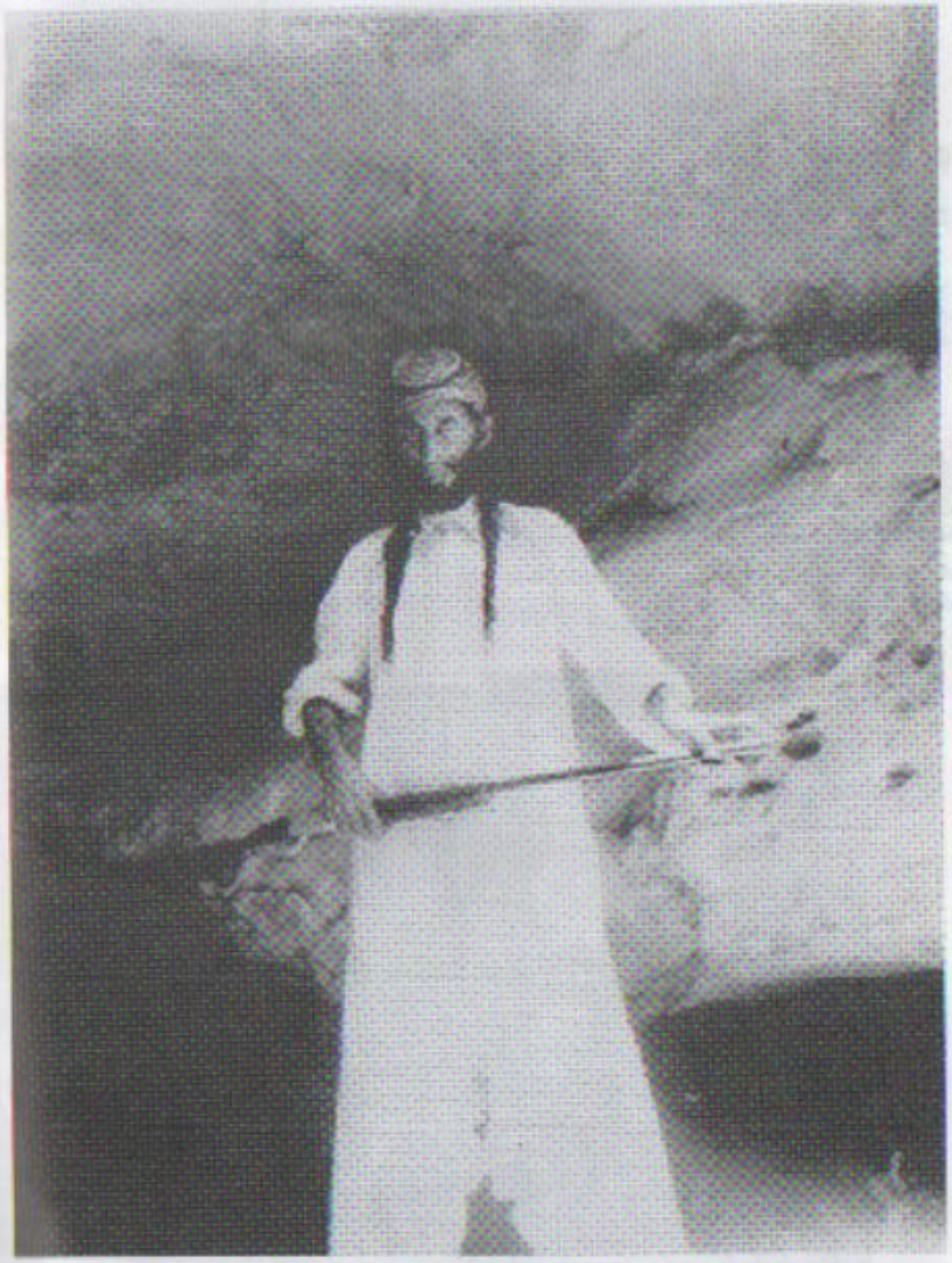
However, Toakali Must was under the protection of the Almighty for he continued his amorous wanderings unscathed until he reached Dera Bugti.

He wasn't, perhaps, quite as mad as he made out. 'Of course, he was penniless and as a true lover, he begged for his food, always asking for two portions, one for himself and one for Sami, his love. But Sami was invisible to everyone but Toakali himself. He would sit on one of those stones and offer the food to somebody unseen, who took and ate it, and you only saw the food disappearing! The two talked to each other and people heard the two voices, and wherever they went, the stones would follow them. Then Toakali came to this place and jumped over this tree which was just a little sapling. The stones tried to follow but got stuck by the roots and they've been here ever since!'

The story of Toakali Must and Sami is often recalled in the dastanaghs sung by the hill Bugtis today.

Mohammed Mondrani showed me another flying-stone known as Bachha Fakir after a holy man of that name who flew through the air on a volcanic stone that landed at Gandoi, a Kalpar levy post in the Zin Range. But somehow or other tales of invisible lovers eating visible food, flying-stones, and all the other magical

phenomena I was to hear about in Bugti territory, seemed almost believable in this stark desert land with its tough, naïve, battle-scarred warriors, and romantic minstrels perpetuating ancient myths and legends in their hypnotic, monotonous songs.



Mohammed Moudrani of Mut, Bugti warrior and the author's personal bodyguard, in Khumbani cave

Mondrani Bugtis show off tupak gun and talwar swords at wedding while Surinda player watches on

Mohammed Mondrani of Mut listens to playback of first tape recording made of voice, and shares amusement at hearing his stutter, covering his mouth with his hand

Mohammed Mondrani of Mut, smokes a hookah in Gandoi fort and, below, with his 'Dil ka Dost' (Friend of my Heart) and their son, in her kitri made of woven leaves of the dwarf palm

Two of Mohammed Mondrani's sons, Sher, with cap, and Lal, grind corn in front of their kirri

Mohammed's chief wife, Nazdi, with nose ring, and second wife, at Khargar loom in Mut. The *shade* temperature was 130°F

5 *Myths and Magicians*

'. . . the pathless gorges are our friends,
Our drink is from the flowing springs,
Our cup the leaf of the dwarf palm (peesh),
Our bed the thorny brush,
The ground we make our pillow.'
(Popular Poetry of the Baloches)

SOMEWHERE in the middle of Mut I lay on my back on a string charpoy, looking up at the dark, moonless sky. It was brilliantly studded with enormous stars that seemed close enough for me to pluck down with one hand. On the ground at the side and end of my bed lay Mohammed Mondrani and his eldest son Taj, my escorts to a family wedding, wrapped in their cotton pushti shawls. Although it was cold, weddings almost always being celebrated during the winter period when the nights were bitter though the days still very hot, I seemed to be the only person aware of the drop in temperature.

We began to discuss the stars.

'What name do you give to that?' I asked, pointing out the Plough (or perhaps you call it the Great Bear or the Dipper).

The Bugtis have their own legend.

'Th – that, M-M-Memsahib, is like your ch-ch-charpoy,' stuttered Mohammed, his usual habit whenever his thoughts began to run faster than his tongue could manage. I can't possibly reproduce his rather endearing impediment, but there he lay, just his bright eyes shining above the white pushti, propping himself up on one elbow. 'We call it the charpoy with four legs – Khattani Phazagh. You see, it is a charpoy with one sheep tied to the bed-leg and beyond that, there is a watch-dog to guard the sheep. And farther away still, there is one wolf attacking the watch-dog. . . .'

The North Star is given the same name as we give it, and the Bugtis too make use of it to find their way in the desert.

'And the Milky Way?' I asked, pulling the blanket up round my neck as a cold breeze whistled down from the hills.

I pointed it out and Mohammed was quick to give the real name. 'That is the back of the sheep,' he said. 'We say that one sheep jumped high into the sky and that some of the wool from its back still clings to the stars.'

The Bugtis use a Sindhi expression, *aklar sumari* which means 'counting the stars' when they lie awake at night looking up at the sky; sleeplessness being uncommon among them, the only occasion when this does happen is when they are star-gazing in frustrated love, so to say that someone is *aklar sumari* is to suggest they are suffering from love-sickness.

I spoke of the earth moving round the sun and both Taj and his father laughed aloud at the mere idea.

'Why, you can feel that it is moving when there is an earthquake, and we would feel that ground shaking all the time if it was really moving in the sky,' they reassured me. 'We can see for ourselves that it is the sun that moves round the earth.'

I learnt that night there are seven skies one behind the other, and beyond the seventh lies heaven itself, a belief not far removed from that of the Jains, which had been solemnly explained to me by a fabulously wealthy Ajmeri banker as we stood in his family temple of solid gold and silver objects. 'The earth is flat', he had told me then, 'and if you go too near the edge you will fall off.'

'What about when we fly right round the earth, what about the horizon you can see from an ocean liner?'

He'd never been on an ocean liner, nor had he flown farther than from Delhi to Bombay at that time, and he told me very patiently as one would explain to a child, that in going round the world you are merely travelling round the edge, as one of a saucer – the idea that the earth is a globe is only an illusion. He pointed out the models in silver and gold, of the flat earth and the several heavens suspended above it in layers, just as Mohammed had described it, with Paradise itself at the very summit. For that matter, I've met people both in England and in the USA, who are firmly convinced of the flatness of the earth, so I could hardly blame either Mohammed or the Jain for being sceptical of the more widely accepted theory.

Later on talk turned to earth itself and to certain snakes in this particular patch of earth occupied by the Bugti tribe, snakes that carry in their mouths a stone called a Manukar. The Manukar emits a glow and the snakes lay it under a bush when they go hunting, returning to pick it up again when they've finished. This stone possesses magical qualities, turning everything it touches to gold – barring the snake itself.

'Of course, the President of Pakistan sits on a golden throne,' Mohammed told me solemnly. 'And everything in his palace is made of gold, because he has one Manukar stone.' (This conversation took place several years before President Ayub Khan actually visited Sui gas field, when I imagined Mohammed hoped for a chance to satisfy his curiosity about this marvellous touchstone.)

Now he mused aloud: 'I wonder where that ajoymudemai – (good man) – got that stone? Maybe the British Raj gave it to him.'

The British, under Napier's command, had marched through Bugti territory in the 1830s when, according to Mohammed, they had found this wonder-stone. There are, however, more credible treasures in the desert and one section of Bugtis are known as 'Dagal Gardis', whose occupation it is to seek this treasure. Most of it consists of ancient weapons, helmets, etc, washed out of age-old hiding-places in mountain caves by exceptionally heavy storms. But all Bugtis are firmly convinced that hordes of gold, silver and jewels lie hidden in the caves, just waiting for the lucky finder.

Mohammed next went on to tell me about the Mamh or Baluchi bear that lives in the Makhamar Valley on the borders of Marri-Bugti country.

'That bear walks always on its hind legs except when it meets a human person, a man,' Mohammed explained. 'The bears are all females so each one captures a human man and forces him to mate with it. They make this man lame and break his legs so that he cannot escape from their caves. But the young they have are always females – they are very bad, those creatures.'

'Have you ever seen one?' I asked.

'No, Memsahib – if I had seen one I would have been captured myself. No, but I have heard these stories and every Bugti knows about the Mamh.'

We talked next of various Bugti saints, many of whose shrines

were built in Multan, a city crowded with magnificent tiled tombs, about a couple of hundred miles to the north-east of Dera Bugti. Hundreds of tribesmen make the pilgrimage to Multan to pay tribute to the memory of Pir Phazahan. During his lifetime, Phazahan healed bullet-wounds by clasping the wound between his two hands and when he took his hands away, the wound would be healed with not so much as a scar to show that it had ever been there! Another famous saint whose tomb I visited in Multan was Pir Shams ud-din Tabriz who is reputed to have tried to raise a boy from the dead by invoking the name of Allah. His prayers seemed to be in vain, for nothing happened, the corpse remained lifeless.

'All right, then, if you refuse to rise in God's name, rise in mine,' the Saint had commanded imperiously, and the boy came to life immediately. This sounded slightly blasphemous to me but Bugtis are not noted for their religious fanaticism and take their saints fairly light-heartedly in general, although they are quick to call on them for help when trouble is around.

The story goes that when Shah – or Pir – Shams-ud-din Tabriz first wandered into Multan, a certain Hazrat Ghaus Bahawal Haq who was already installed, sent him a goblet of milk filled to the brim, to indicate that Multan was already overflowing with saints, and that there was no room for another. Shams-ud-din Tabriz returned the goblet with a freshly-plucked rose dropped on to the surface of the milk without spilling a drop, making it equally plain that he intended to stay.

His domed shrine enclosed within high walls, is built almost entirely of green glazed bricks and tiles exquisitely engraved.

But perhaps it is Hazrat Ghaus Bahawal Haq's shrine that is the most venerated by the Bugtis. Before he went to Multan, he was sleeping in the desert in his little reed-mat shelter and although his only possession was his prayer-mat of peesh, three Baluchis stole this during the night. Hazrat Ghaus then cursed the entire Baluch tribe, swearing that they would never be united, a fact which seems to be only too evident today.

It was Sardar Ahmad Nawaz Khan Bugti, the Chieftain's younger brother, who told me about this particular saint, adding that every time he visited Multan he made a point of praying at the saint's tomb, begging that the curse might be lifted.

Sardar Ahmad Nawaz was not as tall or impressively built as his brother but he had the same fine-cut features and thick glossy hair, the same neatly-trimmed fringe of a beard and a very detailed knowledge of every aspect of Bugti life. He spent far more time than his brother in tribal territory, and it was he who often presided over tribal jirgas, trying to settle disputes, keeping order, and shouldering much of the responsibility for day-to-day administration. Like his brother he too had been educated at Aitchison College, Lahore, so with his mixture of a western-style education and tribal home-life, he was the ideal person to impart much authentic tribal lore and history to me over the years.

As the years passed, I visited several shrines in the Bugti and Marri areas, but that night under the stars, when it seemed nobody had any intention of sleeping, I learnt about the ordinary tribesman's beliefs. Throughout the night, newcomers kept arriving in the little encampment, to be greeted with the traditional requests for news and the eager voices chattered on hour after hour. Unable to sleep myself, I went on quizzing Mohammed and Taj and asked them to tell me more about the strange sweet I'd been given earlier that evening. It was called gaz shakal and remarkably like the Biblical description of the manna that fell from heaven. It looked like dark brown sugar in little clusters and tasted rather like crisp sugar too.

'Gaz shakal comes from the gaz tree, that is the tamarisk, but not from every tamarisk. Only a few special ones in Sui nullah and near Dera Bugti,' Mohammed explained. After the rains, usually in November, small white blobs of sweetish substance appear on the leaves of the tamarisk and are gathered by the Bugtis – the season lasts only a few days so everyone turns out to collect it and the blobs gradually turn brown with exposure to the air, getting darker the longer they are kept. In a good year the Bugtis can gather enough to last for the next twelve months and at the end of this time it looks like demerara sugar. Even as close as Sibi, only about a hundred miles away by horse, gaz shakal is unheard of. I have read one theory that the Old Testament manna was in fact the excrement of a scale insect that lived on tamarisk bushes in Sinai and it does seem as though this might be the same as the Bugti's 'Tamarisk Gold'.

Back in Dera Bugti, not long after this, I learnt more Bugti legends when I was entertained by the Chieftain's family. Escorted by Nazli, a solemn-faced little girl of about five and her

younger brother, Mir Rehan, I'd climbed the steep staircase inside the deserted mud brick house in the corner of the purdah courtyard. Up on the flat roof the children pointed out the various landmarks and from this vantage point you could see just how small and compact the township was and how the mountains on either side of the valley formed protective wings around it.

Then back in the more modern bungalow now occupied by the family, my eye was caught once again by the dramatic photo of Nawab Akbar Bugti in full tribal dress and I begged the Chieftain, who was at home then, to let me take some photos of him in his traditional robes.

He was wearing his usual tartan bush-shirt and jeans but he good-naturedly went inside the bungalow and changed. It was a transformation, almost as though one of the legendary Bugti warrior chiefs, Mir Chakur himself even, had come to life. Indeed, the chieftains of four hundred years ago can't have looked any different from this magnificent figure. Being over six feet tall, bearded and extremely handsome, Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti was a striking man to see in any dress, but now in his robes he was stunning and I made the most of the occasion with cine and still films.

Next the Nawab called for some of the historic weapons from his private collection and began demonstrating them to me, and recounting their history.

With the yards of white turban swathing his head and face, the finely-gathered kirta over the white muslin tunic, he wielded a sword with enthusiasm, showing me how his great-grandfather, Ghulam Murtaza Khan, fought in battle.

'He was very tall, six foot eight – seven feet in his turban – and he used this sword, the famous Wazir-am-Kundi, like this,' and he brought the long curved sword down in a series of short, sharp chopping movements, never raising his arm higher than his shoulder, to prevent the enemy penetrating his guard.

Ghulam Murtaza's father, Islam Khan the Second, who had been taken prisoner by John Jacob, was known as 'the unfortunate' because he lost every battle he fought and was unlucky in everything he did. (At first I didn't realise who Akbar Khan was talking about, since Bugtis drop the 'K' and pronounce Islam as though it was spelt 'Salaman'.) But in 1845, when somebody asked Islam Khan the value of the Wazir-am-Kundi he replied, 'The price of my sword will provide the whole Bugti tribe with one day's meals' – at that time there were about fifteen thousand Bugtis.

'When famine came to Dera Bugti because the rains failed, Islam Khan took his family to his wife's home in Khetran and he stayed there for nine years – that was when Ghulam Murtaza was born. While he was away, the Bugtis back here suffered great hardship and begged him to return – there was no leadership among the tribe, you see. So he came back but then he lost the battle to John Jacob and was exiled; everything seemed to be against him and he went out of his mind. In 1858 the tribe chose his son Ghulam as the Tumandar when he was only fifteen – we called that "Giving him the Putka, the Turban", and he fought his first skirmish the same year.'

Akbar went on to tell me that Ghulam Murtaza was only eighteen when he led a great raid in Kohlu and captured much booty but the Gurchanis, a tribe living on the borders of the Masori area, laid in wait in their hills and swept down on the returning Bugtis, carrying off all the loot – 'Ghulam Murtaza had a sword wound on his shoulder deep enough to put a new-born baby in,' added the Chieftain, fingering his own shoulder thoughtfully, swinging the Wazir-am-Kundi once again round his head. And, suddenly, it no longer seemed surprising that Bugtis grew restless in times of peace, and pounced upon any excuse for a fight.

Ghulam Murtaza's exploits became renowned throughout Baluchistan. 'He would walk eighty miles in a day if need be, and his sword strokes were so powerful that where another man's sword merely inflicted a wound, his would sever complete limbs,' went on the Tumandar.

'During one battle, Ghulam Murtaza cut off the heads of three Bugtis who turned their backs on the enemy, while another man, sitting with his knees drawn up, and his arms round his knees, was cut into eight pieces with one blow of the Wazir-am-Kundi!'

I looked again with increased respect at this formidable weapon, then at some of the ancient muzzle-loading matchlocks which the Bugtis called 'tupak'.

'The most famous tupaks are known as Mirkhani because they were made by a man called Mir Khan,' the Chieftain explained, and before I left Dera Bugti that day he had presented me with a

pair of tupaks and powder horns. The triangular-shaped butts of the tupaks are thickly ornamented with decorative pieces of brass and today they hang on my wall, together with a pair of curved Bugti swords and a rhinoceros-hide shield studded with brass knobs.

Most Bugtis carry a tupak even today, though a few do manage to buy more modern weapons – tupaks are only too often liable to explode and cause more damage to their owners than to the intended victims.

Tales of ancient Bugti battles are recited in much vivid detail and you would think they had taken place only months ago, to listen to some of the stories. Akbar Khan Bugti told me of one such battle in 1820 when the Khan of Kalat, to whom the Bugtis nominally owe allegiance, sent some two thousand Brahui warriors to collect long-outstanding taxes due to him from the Tumandar, Bibrak the Third. Although the Khan, the most powerful ruler of Baluchistan, was acknowledged liege lord of all Baluch tribes, the Bugtis were far too independent by nature to pay the dues he levied and his demands had gone unheeded for generations. Now the Brahuis had orders to raze Dera Bugti to the ground, plunder as much as they liked, and carry off all the women, unless the taxes were paid in full.

'There were only about three hundred Bugtis in Dera at that time,' Akbar told me, 'and leaving a few men behind to kill the women if the battle was lost, they went to meet the Brahuis through the narrow gorge, the Tang (or Tank, where the Mratta slave gained his freedom by climbing the steep cliff). A Bugti woman ran ahead of the menfolk to the Marav plain where there is a shrine to a famous holy man – about eight miles from here.'

Marav was marked on the maps as 'Marav Lake' and I was puzzled when I first drove through the narrow pass and out into what I expected to be the shores of a vast lake, only to find a broad, saucer-shaped valley cultivated in patches here and there with little brush shelters – juggis – among the growing corn, but no signs of water.

I was told that at the beginning of the century when the first – and only – surveys of the area were made, there had been an exceptionally heavy rainstorm in the surrounding hills, flooding the saucer-shaped valley just at the moment when the surveyors

arrived. The men took it to be a permanent lake and so it has remained, officially, on the maps. But ten years may pass without any rainfall at all, and certainly such flooding is an occurrence that takes place perhaps only twice in a century. The rest of the time the inhabitants walk the eight miles to Dera and back to fetch drinking water.

It was obviously dry when the Brahui forces arrived to try and collect their money and the Bugti woman, who took it upon herself to act as an emissary, begged the Brahuis to go away as the Bugtis were too impoverished to pay any taxes.

The Brahuis laughed and told her they planned to carry off all the women into slavery, but they'd treat her exceptionally well and marry her off in tribute to her courage.

The heroine wasn't too enthusiastic at this prospect and turned to run back to the Bugtis. At that moment, an enormous snake emerged from the tomb of the saint, weaving from side to side between the woman and the Brahuis and so prevented the Brahuis from giving chase until the woman had reached safety.

'The tradition is that this was the spirit of our famous saint, Pir Suhri, come to our aid in the shape of a snake,' Akbar Khan told me with a grin. 'Anyhow, whatever it was, there followed a battle when three hundred Bugtis killed six hundred Brahuis and the rest of the enemy threw down their arms, plucked handfuls of grass and prostrated themselves saying, in Brahui, "Mar shumae Mechu, Mar shumae Goko" – "we are your sheep, we are your goats" ', he translated.

Brahuis, a darker-skinned race than the Baluchis, are all that remain of the original Dravidian inhabitants of the country, most of whom were pushed down to the south of India by successive waves of Ayran invaders. Their language is completely different from Baluchi. Because of this I made some recordings of pure Brahui speech in the Kalat highlands, at the request of the late Dr Arnold Baké of the School of Oriental and African Studies, but I myself never studied the language. I found I had all my time cut out to understand the Baluchis.

The case of the Bugti woman who approached the Brahuis for mercy was a very unusual one as this is only done under exceptional circumstances. When a woman does go to the enemy for amnesty, it is regarded usually as a sign of submission from the menfolk.

From the miraculous snake who saved the woman at Marav, talk turned to other examples of supernatural happenings.

'For instance, the Nothanis, who claim that Pir Suhri is their common ancestor, always have an important place in any of our battles,' Akbar Bugti explained. 'They can stop the enemy's bullets, that's why.'

He must have seen my scepticism for he laughed and added: 'Well, of course, I didn't believe this either. The Nothanis say that they shake a pushti – the long shawl worn round the shoulders – and shout out "Ya-a-illah-allah" and the first lines of the Kalima, the Muslim creed, so I asked for a demonstration. They told me that they could only perform in times of battle – they couldn't do this in peacetime. So I teased them about this and told them they were afraid to take up the challenge because they knew they couldn't carry it out.

'In the end, one man said that he would accept my challenge but that he couldn't do so if I fired the gun as, being the chieftain, I was a more powerful Fakir than he was!'

He laughed at the memory, but his laughter was just a little hesitant. 'I agreed to let a servant fire a brand-new German rifle I'd just received from Europe, and I tried it out myself first. It worked perfectly, so then my servant took it, but every time he tried to fire, the bullets just went "tick" and stuck in the barrel. As soon as I took the rifle, it fired perfectly normally, and really I have no explanation for this. The servant was a good and experienced shot, he knew how to handle firearms, so it wasn't a question of ignorance or clumsiness on his part.'

I'd scarcely digested this anecdote than he went on to tell me about the time when he was still a schoolboy and his uncle was acting as Regent.

'Some levies came in with the Tehsildar to arrest a man in the hills and surrounded his house, They in turn found themselves surrounded by Nothanis who started firing. The levies fired back, but after a few shots the Nothanis put on their spell and then the levies couldn't fire a single shot. In the end my Uncle told the levies to leave the hills and he promised to arrest and try the Nothani Bugti at a jirga here in Dera. Incidentally, the Jaffrani subsection of the Masoris are also mystics and they too turn away bullets and cure various diseases.'

There was another story of Nothani Fakirs to be recounted and

by this time we were sitting on the grass, sipping lassi while the Mrattas gathered up all the arms and took them back to the Chieftain's quarters.

'There's a very old man still alive now who had great powers as a Fakir years ago – now he's lost these powers. But I've seen him milking a walking-stick!' Akbar Khan told me. 'First he shouted out some kind of spell and nothing happened, so then he got the women to shout from the roof of the house, at the same time as he did, and then sure enough, he drew milk from the stick!'

He picked up the last of the guns and holding it in his left hand, used his right to demonstrate, pumping it up and down the barrel of the gun in a milking action.

'What about trial by ordeal?' I asked. 'Do you still practice that?'

'Occasionally. We had one such trial last Christmas,' Akbar told me. 'It's very rare for us to hold a trial by ordeal now – most murder cases are clear-cut. There's no need for ordeal then, and usually the murderers confess immediately they are caught. But if a man declares his innocence and there is any doubt, he can volunteer for the ordeal – there's no question of compulsion about it.'

The ordeal by fire is much the same as the fire-walking found in many parts of India and Pakistan as a religious ceremony. In this particular instance, a trench is dug some ten yards long, and filled with the specially long-burning wood known as kahir which retains its heat far longer than other types of wood.

The Dera Bugti fire was well packed down so that the men's ankles would not sink into the ashes, and a flat stone was placed at each end of the trench. Leaves of the akk or karagh, a bush with thick, fleshy, sage-green leaves and purple flowers, growing in the nullahs, were laid on top of the ashes. These same leaves are used to cure sprains and to alleviate eye strain by placing them in the soles of the sandals, and walking on them all day long – perhaps here is yet another traditional, Eastern remedy that could be adapted for use in the West, as many others have been in recent years. The leaves themselves are a deadly poison if eaten, as Alexander the Great discovered when his starving horses and cattle ate them on their long march back from the Indus through the Mekran desert. Even the juice rubbed on to a horse's hide will kill it. 'Yet a deer can eat the leaves without any ill-effects,'

Akbar Khan added. 'Then it can go for months without needing other food or water – even as long as two years!'

The akk leaves having been laid on the ashes, the mulla circled the fire three times, throwing into it seven small leaves from the 'Pir' tree growing in the school-yard, at whose base stand the two 'flying stones' attributed to the poet, Toakali Must.

'May Allah be the witness that as these leaves burn, so shall burn the feet of the guilty ones,' chanted the mulla. Next, two sheep were sacrificed by slitting their throats in the orthodox Muslim manner and the moment the sheeps' blood began to flow, the accused men, who were lined up in front of the trench, started off.

'The first man was standing on the flat stone at the beginning of the trench and he began walking when the blood began to flow,' Akbar Khan explained. 'I was standing about six yards away from the trench, but I had to hold my hand in front of my face, the heat was so fierce. One of the men walked across barefoot, unharmed by the fire. As soon as he reached the end, his feet were examined and water thrown on the soles several times, at hourly intervals. If his feet had been burnt he should have had blisters immediately, but they were quite unmarked and later on we proved that this man was in fact innocent. He told me that he felt the great heat of the fire before he began the test, but as soon as he stood on the stone at the beginning of the trench, he felt cool and absolutely no sensation as he walked over the ashes.'

The three other accused men were burnt as they took the test. 'You could hear the "phust" as they stepped on to the fire and their feet sizzled,' Akbar went on dramatically. 'One man finished the course, but he was very badly burnt and had to pay indemnity to the relatives of the murdered man. The other two men took a few steps only and had to jump off half-way across and their feet too were burnt.

'In my father's time these trials were very common and there were all kinds of other ordeals too. By plunging your hand into boiling water to take out a piece of metal dropped in the water, or having a white-hot iron rod laid across your tongue, or there was a trial by water. A long stick would be thrust into a pool of water and the man who was accused had to lower himself down, holding on to this stick, keeping his head under water while two men who had nothing to do with his clan or family, raced in

opposite directions along a given distance. If the man in the water had to come up for air before the two men finished the race, he was guilty. Or there was another way of doing it; a man would shoot an arrow which the fastest runner in the community had to race and retrieve before the man came up for air.'

It seemed that a lot depended on other people's skill and speed in these trials which took place in a pool at Pishi, some eight miles from Dera Bugti, near the Zin Range.

'I remember one man being accused of committing incest with his sister,' Akbar Khan recalled. 'People had seen him lying by Pir Chhattar's tomb under the date-palms, with his head in his sister's lap while she combed his hair for him. I daresay it was some frustrated would be lover of the sister who made this accusation. Anyhow, Father decreed trial by fire for both the brother and sister and they both walked the fire unscathed so the accuser was punished.'

Although the Bugtis are Muslims of the orthodox Sunni sect, they are extremely superstitious with tremendous faith in charms and amulets, magic incantations and spells, and few of them bother about praying, fasting or making pilgrimages except to their own Bugti shrines. Two of the most important of these are Pir Suhri's, on the crest of the Pir Koh mountain, and that of Pir Durbar Fateh Khan, Pirozani, on the Zin range, between Dera Bugti and Sui.

Pir Suhri was also a Pirozani Nothani and his name means 'red'. He was a goat-herd when the Four Friends, that is, the first four Khalifs following the Prophet Mohammed, appeared and asked him for a goat. He explained that only one goat out of the herd belonged to him but he gladly gave it to the Four who roasted and ate it. In return, he was told that if ever he lost his job, he should take his own goats and keep them separate and they would be of a kind unknown elsewhere. Suhri was also given a staff which he had only to drive into the ground for water to appear. So instead of taking the herd to water-holes perhaps miles away, Suhri merely plunged his magic staff in the ground.

This soon came to the notice of the owner of the herds who decided Suhri must be a Fakir and could obviously not be employed as a menial goat-herd.

By this time, the goat herd was once more in possession of a goat, representing his wages, and this he put in a fold. When he

awoke next morning, it was to find the fold full of goats that were either reddish-brown or had reddish-brown ears, unlike any seen in that area before. A gang of Buledis cut off his head and stole his herd but Suhri came to life, holding his head in his hands, and chased the frightened men who fell at his feet, asking his blessing. Thus Suhri arrived at his home, headless, but before dying once and for all, he begged his sons to bind him on a camel and make his tomb wherever the camel sat without again rising.

The camel rested in four separate places at each of which grew a kahir tree (*Prosopis Spicigera*) and finally rested on top of the steepest, most precipitous range in the country!

Another of Akbar Khan's anecdotes concerned Rezai Bikiani, again a Pirozani Nothani, who lived some three hundred years ago and was renowned as a soothsayer.

'He prophesied that a strange, pale-faced people in strange clothes would come from the West and rule our country for a while and then return to their own homes. He put his ear to the ground and listened and said, "There, don't you hear those iron horses? Those white people are bringing iron horses here." Of course his companions thought he was mad – but the railways came, and motor-cars, didn't they? Another time he looked at two, swift-running streams and he shook his head sadly and said, "I feel very sorry, but I don't see any sheep grazing here much longer". And a few years later both the streams had quite dried up although it seemed at the time they could never run dry.'

Pir Rezai is buried about half a mile west of the first of the wild-cat wells drilled by the oil company on the Zin Range and which was a complete disappointment. According to local tradition, however, Pir Rezai put his hand on a stone only two miles from the spot where the wild-cat was drilled, and said, 'Beneath this stone is untold wealth for all the Bugti tribe.'

At the time it was thought he referred to gold, but today the tribe is convinced that he meant oil or natural gas and that the Company had missed by only two miles, the real gusher everyone was waiting for.

It seemed that supernatural powers were not confined only to men.

'You know, we've two old witches in Dera Bugti', Ahmad Nawaz went on to reveal. 'They're Hindus and the locals say that they ride on jackals or hyenas and one man brought a pair of

jackals to my father once. He had shot them and he claimed that they must be the witches' steeds as they had gold rings through their ears! If anyone is sick, the old women are said to turn into flies and go down the throat of the sick person, so a guard is placed on their house to make sure the witches stay indoors. Sometimes they've escaped in spite of the guard, and have been found in the houses of the sick – but not in the shape of flies,' Ahmad added with a laugh.

Naturally I felt I must see these witches for myself and was taken to a small, mud-brick house in a narrow lane, where two very ancient, shrivelled up, harmless-looking old women sat in the sun in their little purdah yard. True enough they wore gold rings in their ears – so does every Bugti girl who can afford gold and those who can't, wear silver. There were plenty of flies around too, but that was hardly unusual and there was no offer to demonstrate their ability to ride on jackals.

Witches and Fakirs and magic, flying stones . . . I left Dera Bugti that day with my eyes almost popping out of my head, determined to find out more about the Pirozani Nothanis and penetrate their mountainous stronghold just as soon as possible.

6 *Lovers – Dead and Alive*

'The sign of death is a hot fever,
The sign of rain is dust and haze,
The sign of love is smiling. . . .'
(Popular Poetry of the Baloches.)

It's impossible to be long among the Bugtis without hearing somebody sing a love-song. Yet Bugti lovers need an abnormal reserve of high courage, low cunning and sheer, dogged persistence. While marriages are arranged often before children are even born, love-affairs can and usually do end in death for both parties. In spite of this, almost all Bugti love-songs are addressed to married women.

Adultery is the most serious of all offences in tribal lore, and is punishable by death, and of all the Baluch tribes, the Bugtis and Marris are the most strict to enforce this. It needs no more than the hint of suspicion, a rumour spread by a frustrated, jealous lover or perhaps an older, spurned woman. As the Chieftain's younger brother, Sardar Ahmad Nawaz Khan explained, even the sight of a woman turning to look at a passing man is sufficient for the husband to accuse her of adultery – and obviously provides an easy method of getting rid of unwanted wives, no matter how baseless the accusation.

'The man is put to death usually by the sword, or he is shot,' Ahmad told me, 'and the woman must hang herself from a tree!'

'You mean that she would actually commit suicide even if she was innocent?' I asked, incredulously.

'Oh yes, you see, it would be dishonourable for a man to have to kill his own wife, but he couldn't permit her to go on living if there was any suspicion that she had dishonoured his name.'

One might suppose that this threat was sufficient to discourage illicit love-making, but Bugti folk-lore is full of tales of devoted

and daring lovers; Ahmad Nawaz told me of one man who walked sixty miles from Shikarpur and back every night to spend an hour with his beloved. He managed to get away with it for nine successive nights, but on the tenth, over-confident, he stayed too long and was caught just as he was leaving his inamorata's hut. He was killed on the spot while his unfortunate girl-friend hanged herself.

Another man became suspicious of his wife when he noticed her glancing out of the hut door just in time to see the white garments of a passing Bugti. The husband feigned sleep for the next twenty-eight nights but his wife never stirred from the bed; however, on the twenty-ninth night, his wife jabbed him in the side to make sure he was sleeping. The husband grunted convincingly, turning over on his side as his wife then got up and walked out of the hut. She walked for two miles to her rendezvous under a large tamarisk tree where her lover had waited hopefully every night, in case she should come. He was there this night too, but just in time he spotted the wife's husband following her and he ran off into the desert.

'Why do you run away and leave me alone to face punishment? Oh, you coward!' she cried out when she saw what had happened. But while her husband stood by, she dutifully hung herself from the tamarisk tree, while on this occasion the lover escaped unscathed.

'Of course, a few women do manage to escape,' Ahmad Nawaz told me. 'If a woman lives in Dera Bugti, for instance, and she has the temperament and the opportunity, she can try to reach the Tumandar's house. If she escapes from her husband long enough to do this, she can claim sanctuary there and my brother will keep her safely in his household. Then once a year, sometimes twice if there are many women, he will have a kind of auction in the outer courtyard. He sits under the manhir and men come from distant villages to bid for a bride. These are poor men, too poor to pay the normal heavy "lab" or bride price. This year (1958) because of rising costs, the lab and fines for murder too, were reviewed for the first time in something like twenty years and now a bride costs four or five thousand rupees (£300–£375), usually paid in kind, in camels, sheep or goats and guns

'The men call out their reasons for wanting a wife – some may be widowers with young children to care for, others need a

woman to look after the cattle and draw the water, others want sons. But one thing must be certain, none of the men must come from anywhere near Dera Bugti where the women used to live. They must be taken right out of their old tribal area so that there's never any possibility of trouble from the former husband.'

This reminded me of a conversation I'd had with the Political Agent at Sibi in 1956. Sibi is the dusty little town at the foot of the Bolan Pass, where the annual Durbar used to be held, when Baluch chieftains and rulers would parade in full tribal regalia, together with something like forty thousand tribesmen.

The PA, a Bengali to whom Baluchistan and its tribes were every bit as alien as they were to me, told me that in the two jirga sessions he held every month he averaged some two hundred cases, of which at least half were for murder and half of those murders committed in vengeance on men suspected of having seduced somebody's wife. Nearly every one of the men accused of murdering their wife's lover admitted this freely and the usual penalty was a heavy fine.

'I have women coming to me, confessing they've committed adultery,' the PA told me, 'but actually when I question them, it often means no more than simply talking to a man outside the family circle. And they run the risk of being killed by merely coming to see me! Once they do come, they are under the protection of the tribal chief and if the case is proven, we send the women away, usually to Sind, where new husbands are found for them. They can't marry into the tribe again, and the new husband pays something like thirteen hundred rupees (about £100), half of it to the tribal chieftain, and half to the former husband'.

The Baluchi's ideal beauty is slender, 'moving with serpent-like grace or like the monsoon winds; her eyes are red like those of a pigeon, her cheeks like dawn, her hair like the Zamar (an evergreen, creeping plant found in the high ravines), curling like black snakes. Her eyebrows are thin and arched like the new moon, with lashes like arrows and lips as thin as paper. Her mouth should be small and her teeth like pearls. She should have breasts like apples and her fingers should be long, pointed and with nails dyed red with henna.'

The *beau idéal* of a tribesman is a man who has committed a robbery and escaped, has murdered at least one man and who possesses a swift and sturdy mare. 'A man with his saddle on a

mare, has his saddle on a horse. A man with his saddle on a horse, has his saddle on his head.'

(No Bugti would ever ride anything but a mare into battle and except for selected stallions, all others would normally be killed at birth.)

Unless a man could fulfill these conditions he was very unlikely to find a bride; no father was going to offer his daughter to such a worthless fellow.

Often, among relatives, an arrangement is made whereby children are betrothed as babes in arms, and the boy's father pays the dowry with a down payment and the rest in instalments – usually about Rs. 20 – say, less than £2 – a year. This is to help pay for the child's clothing until she is actually married. It's a calculated risk, since if the girl dies before marriage, there's no refund, but it is a cheaper and less painful way of meeting the usually heavy bride price.

It's virtually unknown for a Bugti woman to become a prostitute. Bugtis are to proud to accept payment for their love-making, so that prostitutes are almost always Pathans, Sindhis or Punjabis. They fall into two types: women born into the profession, and those who go into it for the sole purpose of making money. The former look down on their commercially-minded sisters with contempt, and men boast proudly of love-affairs their fathers and grandfathers indulged in with famous entertainers who were skilled singers and dancers with no financial need to prostitute themselves unless it was to satisfy their own passion.

Normally this type of girl is kept by one man only, who will set her up in her own house, making her an allowance of perhaps as much as five or six thousand rupees monthly, besides paying all her household expenses. He allows the girl to earn more by singing and dancing if she wishes; a really top-flight professional can earn as much as twenty-six thousand rupees in one night – nearly £2,000!

Men at a stag-party will vie with each other to show their appreciation of a good artiste, and as the singer or dancer gets more and more worked up, so the shower of rupees increases from five to ten and then a hundred at a time, often prompted slyly by some of the woman's male relatives who sit among the audience and start the ball rolling with the smaller sums.

It isn't always the man with the most money who gains the

sweetest smiles from the dancing girl. Very often a wealthy merchant will find his hundred rupee notes ignored while the girl will give an encore to an impoverished young man who takes her fancy.

Girls of this class are often worth lakhs of rupees, with property and land of great value, and men of the best families consider it an honour to be invited to a meal by such an hereditary entertainer who can pick and choose virtually anyone she wishes to meet.

Girls like these are not, of course, found in the barren tribal districts but in border towns such as Jacobabad, Sukker and Shikarpur.

As for divorce, this is only valid among Bugtis if performed in front of the Chieftain or his representative, Sardar Ahmad Nawaz Bugti. It is the usual Muslim form of divorce in which the husband throws three stones or three rupees, one at a time, on the ground before his wife, saying, 'I divorce you, I divorce you, I divorce you.' But unlike normal Muslim divorce, if a man neglects to perform this ceremony in front of the Chieftain or his brother, he can claim back his wife years later if he wishes, no matter how much time has elapsed since his 'divorce'.

It was Bugti weddings that fascinated me, and the first I attended was in the unlikely-sounding territory of Mut, Mohammed Mondrani's tribal area. I hadn't long been living in Sui when Mohammed invited me to his 'mena' and being new, I expected to see some kind of village. But mena means a nomadic encampment, nothing more, as I soon discovered.

The journey began one evening when I left Sui in a borrowed land-rover which had to be sent back as soon as I reached my destination. It was my first night away from Sui and my first trip alone with only Mohammed Mondrani as my companion and I still felt a little uneasy. Mohammed met the land-rover just outside the gas field, where the road meandered into the desert and became a camel track. He was standing by the side of the track, his long baggy trousers hitched up to his calves, an oil lantern with the wick flickering, held in one hand. He refused to climb in the back of the land-rover but set off across country at a run, the lantern swinging in a wide arc of pale yellow light, and we bumped behind him over the stony desert.

At one point we passed an ancient white-bearded Bugti leading a camel swaying under an awkward load concealed by a white

pushti. Since Mohammed made tracks towards him, I thought that perhaps this was something to do with the wedding – possibly even, the bride, covered up and concealed in a special kind of carrier. When we caught up with the camel, however, it was to find Mohammed gesticulating angrily at the old man, and finally pulling the pushti off the load, stuttering with rage as he revealed an empty oil-drum stolen from the gas field.

With justifiable triumph, Mohammed and my driver pulled the oil-drum off the camel's back and loaded it into the land-rover; at least Mohammed had earned his night off from his task of guarding the camp!

Now he began running again, still refusing to ride in the land-rover. The louder I called him to come back, the faster he ran. We chased him across the desert while his long ringlets flew on the breeze and he leapt across gullies and rocks like a young gazelle with a graceful carelessness and a touching faith in our ability to follow.

By this time the driver, a Punjabi, was ready to turn round and find his way back to Sui, but I persuaded him to keep going just a little longer, and Mohammed, who had come back to see why we were lagging, finally agreed to climb in with us.

Half a mile farther on, the engine coughed and died, and the headlights went out. We scrambled down to stand in the darkening desert with only the distant maniacal laughter of hyenas to disturb the night. Suddenly Mohammed clutched the driver's arm and pointed to the left. I strained my eyes to peer through the night and finally spied a tiny twinkle of light, it seemed miles away.

'There – there is Mut!' Mohammed announced triumphantly.

The driver, who had opened the bonnet and was fiddling somewhat aimlessly by the light of Mohammed's lantern, breathed an incantation and the engine miraculously spluttered into life. He breathed more spells and the lights came on. Then with Mohammed perched on the bonnet we set off on the last lap of our journey.

One small fire, fed sparsely with cherished and scarce tamarisk branches, was almost hidden by the crowd of tribesmen clustered round the flames, some with their horny, bare feet right in the fire. An even smaller fire over the brow of the hill betrayed the whereabouts of the women's camp where they sang the Halo,

the wedding song, with its questions and answers, at intervals throughout the night.

Almost hypnotized by the flames, now stoked up in honour of my arrival, I suddenly let out a gasp of pain as my knees came into contact with a wooden charpoy, and Mohammed explained that the string bedstead had been specially brought on camel back for my benefit, as he couldn't expect me to sleep on the ground like the Bugtis did.

'Nindi, nindi,' he urged, patting the charpoy and inviting me to sit down. Then he hung his lantern on a forked stick planted in the ground and offered the driver a cup of milky, sweet tea in an old baked-beans tin, obviously salvaged from the gas field. Finally came the moment when I had to say good-bye to my link with the civilization I knew. It wouldn't be for long, but in that dark, moonless night, my first experience of being surrounded by these fiercely bearded faces lit by the flickering flames, the only woman in their midst, I felt very much alone.

It was winter-time, with cold breezes from the snowy mountains round Quetta, and seeing me shiver, Mohammed now supervised the construction of a 'tambour' over my charpoy; this temporary shelter consisted of two crossed sticks at either end of the charpoy, with a central ridge-pole laid between them, a couple of peesh mats draped over the top and another round one side of the charpoy, and there was a screen to keep out the worst of the wind. Whenever I looked up I was conscious of the pressure of bodies against the mat shelter and the dozens of pairs of curious, dark eyes, at every gap, watching my very breathing with breathless anticipation. Not that I was doing a strip-tease. Quite the reverse. I'd worn ski pants over long Swiss silk underski pants, a pullover, and a shirt and a sheep-skin jacket from Afghanistan, plus three rugs which I now piled on top of me. A dozen or so men crouched all night long round the fire on the open side of my tambour, replenishing it whenever the flames died down. But none of the men wore anything more than the usual white tribal robes with a cotton pushti round their shoulders.

A chestnut mare, prisoned by one fetlock to a post supporting the reed-thatched roof of an open-sided shelter, munched with contented noises at a load of dried corn stalks, while a soft jingle of harness made the night restless as tribal guests rode into Mut, dark shapes of long-barrelled matchlocks piercing the night. The

silhouette of a camel and its hunched rider lurched past my charpoy and Mohammed called out softly. There was a muted jangle of bells and harness as the camel folded up neatly and its rider climbed down to fasten the guiding rope round a large stone. He lifted off his wooden saddle and the striped, woven cloths with their tasselled fringes, and settled by Mohammed's side, using his saddle as a pillow.

'Khushai, drahair, khairbis, khairkal, mehra . . .' he greeted him. ('Are you happy, are you well, has everything been peaceful? Are you quite sure that everything is peaceful?') The greetings are a matter of custom and both men spoke them in chorus, getting the preliminaries over quickly. Then followed the more serious, real news known as taking the Hal. Wherever Bugtis meet, this is obligatory so that every small item of news is distributed all over the area in a miraculously short space of time. Only one subject is taboo – you should never make inquiries about a man's womenfolk, and if you ask him how many children he has, he will invariably give you the number and names of his sons – never even mentioning the existence of girls.

Because I can see and respect the traditional viewpoint I have made comparatively little mention of Bugti women, particularly of the Chieftain's family of whom I actually saw quite a lot. As Sardar Ahmad Nawaz once pointed out when I had proposed writing this book, 'it stands to reason that since no man may look at our womenfolk or talk about them, how could we countenance millions of male readers virtually having a look into their private and personal lives in print and learning their real, given names?'

I only wish there *was* a chance of readership running into millions but this viewpoint is a logical development of tribal laws and I do not propose to write anything that might upset the feelings of a tribe who have given me so much ungrudging and generous hospitality and who have so often told me they regard me as one of themselves.

That night I dozed with the voices of newcomers and of the singing women across the hill in my ears, conscious of the fire occasionally being replenished, till Mohammed roused me to attend the nikah, the marriage ceremony that was to take place in the women's camp. I looked at my massive Rolex, about the only watch I possessed that was really desert-proof – and saw that it was still only half-past four and pitch-dark.

I had to leave behind my cameras and flash but Mohammed allowed me to take the tape-recorder; he, of course, understood what it was all about. But the other Mondranis did not and in spite of a demonstration with a playback, they were convinced that the machine also took their photos. I was walking up the hill, with Mohammed carrying the machine for me, when a party of older men rushed up and began remonstrating angrily, reaching out for the tape-recorder. Both Mohammed and the bridegroom, Lal Han, a handsome young chap, tried to reassure the older men but it looked as though a fight was inevitable so I put the machine on the ground, where we were still out of sight of the women's camp, and tried to make a recording there.

But it was useless. The excited voices of the men, drowned by Mohammed's vibrant 'Chhup, chhup!' as he shouted for silence, swamped all but a faint background of song.

I gave up the attempt and put the machine back in my tambour, then set off again for the women's camp.

The three small kirris stood inside a protective wall of camel thorn bushes and as soon as we stepped inside, I was surrounded by excited women and girls, all eager to greet me and to clasp my hands between theirs, finger my clothes, pull my hair curiously and assail Mohammed with questions. In one corner a group of good-looking girls, with two or three old women, were making nan, putting the freshly-baked thick flaps of unleavened bread under pieces of sacking to keep them hot, and piling them up in dozens. Sacks of atta flour leant against the hedge – later the sacks would be bleached and used to make dresses. And all the while, the wedding-song was kept up by a circle of women and girls sitting on the ground near the kirris.

A group of male relatives squatted on another peesh mat a few yards away while Pozhdah the mulla, an elderly man with a small, carefully trimmed white beard, took the place of honour in the middle of the men's mat.

I was still trying to discover the whereabouts of the bride. Mohammed had left me alone with the women and there was no one to translate for me. I couldn't think of the word for bride but finally I managed to ask 'where the wedding man's woman' was and they all pointed to the kirris behind us and promptly burst into the question-and-answer song once more. As though on cue, three or four more women emerged from one of the shelters

carrying peesh mats which they arranged round a framework of two forked sticks with a branch laid across the top. The women were still singing lustily and one of the men sitting with the mulla came across to tell them to be quiet. The mulla was about to begin his part of the ceremony but the women weren't at all keen on being shut up and the nasal, high-pitched voices continued for several moments before finally dying down; then at last we heard the mulla intoning extracts from the Koran and reciting the namaz prayers while the men stood around following the prayers with the appropriate actions – kneeling, touching the ground with their foreheads, putting their cupped hands to ears, eyes, heart and mouth.

Except for the fact that the women had reluctantly stopped singing they took absolutely no notice at all of the mulla and his prayers but chattered among themselves, feeling my hair and prodding my body curiously until one of the men shushed them impatiently. Then Mulla Pozhdah completed the nikah ceremony by asking the bridegroom if he would marry Murgi. Lal Han was a handsome young man of twenty-four, with a thick beard and luxurious ringlets down to his waist, and after he'd given his reply somewhat bashfully, one of the older men went off to ask Murgi the bride, still hidden in the smallest of the shelters, if she agreed. Three times the messenger went to ask Murgi for her consent and in the proper fashion she refused the first couple of times and with becoming modesty accepted on the third plea.

Now they were married – now at last they could see each other for the first time.

Murgi's mother, a wrinkled, sun-dried creature who was probably no more than thirty and looked more than twice that, beckoned me now to the small peesh-matting tent which she explained was called a chhapar – the bridal tent. I crouched low to scramble inside and behind me the other women pushed and shoved until I found myself almost on top of the bride herself, who had just been brought out from the brushwood juggi behind, completely concealed in a scarlet spotted sirree and guided into her chhapar.

There was only room for a new peesh mat set on the ground in the middle of the tent, and another at one side, piled with freshly gathered green reeds to form a bed. A couple of woven saddle-bags

filled with rugs and bolsters were stacked on top of the reeds.

Murgi, a small, motionless figure, sat in the middle of the centre mat, her heavy veil still enveloping her from head to foot, while more and more women and children pushed into the chhapar until we were so tightly jammed you could hardly lift a finger, and even breathing became a physical exercise.

Babies squawked, clinging like little leeches to their mothers' breasts sucking greedily through a slit at one side of their pushk dresses. Small children pushed relentlessly, scratching and pinching their way to the bride's side, while the groom, with Murgi's father and brothers, pulled the edges of the peesh tenting apart to peer down at her. Everyone chattered eagerly, laughing and joking and a thoroughly good time was obviously being had by all except the bride.

Somebody lifted her veil for me to see a small sad face and tear-stained cheeks, her eyes red with weeping. Obediently she held out a tiny palm stained red with heeni, a dye made from a plant called the mehdi. One of the women explained that you take the leaves of the mehdi bush and grind them finely between two stones. The powder is then mixed with water and left to soak for five or six hours and you have a strong dye which the men use to stain their hair and beard a bright red to indicate they've made the pilgrimage to Mecca. And if you are a bride, you use it to decorate the soles of your feet and the palms of your hands.

'It makes you very cool,' they told me. 'But you must never put heeni on your head at the same time as on your hands and feet because then the heat cannot leave your body at all and you will die.'

They told me Murgi was twelve years old, but she looked an undernourished eight. I put some rupees in her hand, the mana mokh as these personal cash presents to the bride are called, and offered a necklace of poppet beads and a printed silk scarf, all I could find at all suitable for her. The sirree was draped over an expressionless face once again and Murgi remained silent, still as a statue, the sacrificial lamb waiting for the slaughter.

But the women more than made up for Murgi's silence. Why was my hair so short? Why didn't I put grease on it and make it smooth like theirs? Offers to do this for me had to be tactfully refused.

Had I any children? How many? I invented three, all boys of course, for prestige' sake, and then remembered too late that Mohammed Mondrani well knew I had no children.

Other women and male relatives now pushed in, offering mana mokh. The striped, woven harteer carpet-bag was untied and the bride's trousseau displayed. Two sets of pushk dresses, shalwars and sirrees and that was the sum total. At this point somebody outside leant too heavily on the tent pole and the whole contraption collapsed amid pandemonium. But when the peesh mats and the poles were lifted and rearranged, Murgi was still sitting absolutely still and silent.

I handed round the sweets I had brought and backed out of the crowd into the intoxicatingly fresh air. Back in the men's camp everyone was stirring. Somebody brought a mushk, a large goatskin, full of muddy water for me to rinse my face and hands, and a small boy shyly presented me with a bunch of mooswag twigs to clean my teeth. Jiwan Mondrani, another Sui employee, filled the huge black cauldron with water and stirred the grey ashes of the fire into life. Many of the visitors had brought their Mratta slaves with them and it was obvious that although Nawab Akbar Khan had officially declared slavery illegal, a great many Bugtis had ignored this edict. It was hard to see just what the Mrattas could do, where they could go and how they might earn a livelihood away from their masters who, on the whole, treated them no better nor worse than any poor relation.

The slaves now began collecting the horses and camels and led them to the nearest water-hole. Normally this would have been women's work, but with strangers around, the Mondrani women kept strictly to their own camp. Most of the visitors wore hand-woven red and orange trappings with curved talwar swords handed down from father to son. Until the Chieftain ordered the collection of shields a year or two previously, the complementary circular rhino-hide shield studded with big brass bosses, would have been slung over every man's back.

'I thought that by collecting the shields and swords I might be able to discourage this eternal warfare between the clans,' the Chieftain told me later. 'But very few Bugtis handed in their swords though they did give up most of the shields, and tribal feuds seem to go on as frequently as ever.'

The shields were, in any case, very old. I have one now, hanging on my wall, framed by a pair of curved talwars with silver hilts,

one of them in the shape of a horse's head with small pieces of turquoise inset for the eyes. I don't know when the last rhino roamed Bugti territory but four hundred years ago the Emperor Babur recorded hunting rhino in this area and no doubt the Bugtis found enough of the tough hides buried under the sands or lying in mountain caves, to provide themselves with a good supply of material.

Most Bugtis carried tupaks, home-made, muzzle-loading guns with flat, triangular-shaped butts decorated with ornamental pieces of brass indicating the number of victims killed. A few had more modern rifles, bought from Pathan traders or in the bazaars of Multan, and stamped, I noticed, with a Czech trade-mark. Others carried the vicious-looking hatchets called tawa.

But everyone, even the minstrels who squatted by the fire singing their epic songs and playing their crude stringed instruments or reed flutes, made sure their weapons were cradled in the crook of an arm or slung across their backs. And if by chance a man was too poor to afford a gun, he could certainly afford a hatchet, used equally for chopping fuel or splitting open a man's skull.

Now the rising sun revealed all the details I'd missed in the dark night; the small gold ear-rings almost every man wore, and the heavy gold (or brass) finger-rings set with pieces of coloured glass or rough-cut, semi-precious stones like agates, amethysts and turquoises, found in the hills.

A circular, open-sided hut thatched with reeds – not a jubbri for these are open only on one side – stood near my charpoy.

'We c-call those ch-cherri,' stuttered Mohammed, his ringlets freshly oiled and curled, his dark, heavily-lined face wrinkled in an amiable smile. 'That is where the c-cooking is done. At the time of a w-w-wedding it is the men who c-cook the sajji and the kak and the rice and the c-curry . . .'

'And what do the women cook?'

'They just c-cook the n-nan.'

Inside the cherri an old crone presumably sufficiently ancient to risk exposure to the gaze of men, was busy mixing flour and water in a wide, flat-bottomed dish carved from a single piece of wood. By her side stood a three-foot high slice of dark, well-polished tree-trunk, hollowed out to make a container in which butter and curds were churned; hanging from a branch wedged into the wall of the cherri was a small, amber-coloured goat-skin called a heenz, half full of lassi, my favourite drink; curds mixed with herbs and spices.

Two or three deep pottery vessels were sunk into the ground in front of the cherri, half-filled with hot ashes, and the old woman slapped flat circles of dough round the insides of the jars; in a few minutes they were baked into nan.

Sajji was spitted on long sticks and already cooking between the two banks of kahir wood, gradually moved closer to the meat while the cooks basted it continuously. It was a process that took several hours but the result was a special kind of magic transforming the toughest old goat or sheep into delectable, tasty meat.

I was already feeling hungry but I knew that there'd be no food for at least another couple of hours; however, to keep me going, Mohammed brought me a brass bowl full of very sweet, very milky tea. Since I never drink tea at the best of times, and cannot bear it with either sugar or milk, it was quite an ordeal to drink this under Mohammed's critical gaze, and to give the appearance of enjoying it. No chance at all to spill a little 'by accident' when this relentless stare was fixed on my every movement. And I was well aware that the more milk and sugar in the tea, the higher the honour, both commodities being very scarce and expensive.

A group of bearded tribesmen merrily handled huge shovels to ladle out the saffron rice they had cooked in enormous metal cauldrons over a trench filled with glowing ashes. The rice was shovelled on to peesh mats held at the corners by many willing hands, and a few yards away the joints of sacrificial sheep that had cried by my bed throughout the night were now turning a deep golden-brown, tended by a Bugti whose long ringlets were tucked into the folds of his turban to stand out like a pair of Viking horns.

My charpoy had now been moved into the shade of the open-sided reed shelter and here I was joined by the mulla and two tribal elders. Soon the first big wooden platters of food were carried round to the elders sitting in small groups here and there, their long white beards wagging as they gossiped.

By the time the platter was set before me, my initial hunger pangs had almost disappeared. The rice was joined by curry and

armfuls of sajji, several flaps of nan-bread and a round kak loaf all to myself. Mohammed pulled out a lethal-looking home-made clasp-knife coated with dried blood and offered to tackle my food with it. To my shame I couldn't do more than make an almost indistinguishable dent in my meal, but Mulla Pozhdah and his companions polished off their helpings and came back for more. Bugtis don't often have a chance of eating more than plain bread and thin goat's milk, and when rice does come their way they wolf an average of six pounds each a day, in addition to the meat. Vegetables were non-existent and the only kind of sweetmeat I ever encountered among the ordinary tribesfolk was gaz shekal, the 'honey' or 'tamarisk gold' from tamarisk bushes.

Some people were still eating as I saw the bridegroom's relations carry the remains of the rice and meat to the women's camp. They would finish up the congealed leavings!

It was now nearly eleven o'clock. The sun was high, and the day was sizzling. I had hoped to take some ciné film of the dancing and racing that was to come – at least, I had been told that we would have the races after we had eaten. But 'dancing, dancing was in the night,' I was told firmly.

And nothing could persuade any of them to do something so unconventional as to dance during daytime.

Now horses and camels were being collected for the races which were to take place on the bed of the smooth, sandy nullah. Some of the horses were saddled, others had only a woven saddle-cloth flung over their backs; some were harnessed, others not. It was enough to make the guests break out into ferocious arguments, arms and voices raised, rifles waving dangerously in the air. Finally the school of no saddles, no stirrups, won the day, and we all trooped down to the nullah.

Out of the sun, in a flurry of sand, emerged the trotting ponies, flailed by their riders waving sticks and yelling war-cries as they kept to the single-foot pace that is characteristic of Bugti ponies. Single-footing can be kept up all day long without a rest and is far more useful in the desert than the canter, trot or gallop that took me many weeks to teach my own pony.

Next came somewhat disorderly camel-races. The undisciplined creatures galloped off in every direction but the right one. And then the younger men took off their turbans, bunched up their ringlets, tucked up their baggy pants and flung away their shirts

to race laughing down the nullah, followed by a grey-beards' race and another for the small boys.

Among the tamarisk bushes on the high banks of the nullah I glimpsed an occasional flash of scarlet as the girl children, forbidden to join in the festivities reserved for men, stole a peep at the fun down below.

And back in the women's camp, Murgi was still sitting motionless, silent, beneath her wedding veil, red-eyed but submissive. For after all, she was only an inferior female.

7 *A Political Marriage*

'Come, my sons, with faces like bridegrooms,
Valiant warriors of the Mazaris. . . .'
Haidar Balachani Mazari. (T. J. L. Mayer: Baloch Classics 1900)

At the time of the Bugti–Pathan riot that hot summer night in Sui, the Chieftain's kinsman, Mir Ghulam Haidar, had gone to Quetta to buy his daughter's trousseau.

There'd been talk of that wedding for weeks.

'You will surely come,' the Bugtis said to me. 'There will be much feasting and many guests and racing of camels and horses and singing and dancing and the Nothani Fakirs. . . .'

If I'd ever any notion of refusing that invitation, mention of the Nothani Fakirs would have changed my mind. It was Rahim Bux Kalpar who first mentioned the coming wedding and this was followed quickly by the official invitation: 'Your presence will be highly welcomed to attend lunch at 1100 hours on Friday and dinner at 2000 hours on Thursday, at Dera Bugtis, in connection of my daughter's marriage ceremony which will be held on that date. Thanks. Yours faithfully, Mir Ghulam Haidar, Bugti.'

This would be no ordinary wedding like those I'd attended at tribal centres such as Mut, Goh and Pezhboogie. This was to be a far more elaborate Chieftains' celebration since the bridegroom was the nephew of the Mazari Chieftain (whose territory adjoined that of the Bugtis, to the east) and son of Rahim Yar Khan, who had acted as Regent during the Mazari Chieftain's minority.

I decided to take Rahim Bux with me, as well as Mohammed Mondrani, for Rahim, a quiet, shy youth of twenty-one, was one of two Bugtis working as English-speaking clerks in the Sui office, the first to achieve this big step forward from the traditional tribal life. Rahim had gone to the Dera Bugti school and there

Mohammed Mondrani holds camel while Kalpar Bugtis fetch water from a 'chass'

As night falls, 15 year-old Lal, with his mother, and his 16 year old bride veiled, on his left, wait in wedding 'chhapar' of peesh mats while women prepare bread for the wedding feast

First photograph ever taken of a Bugti bride— 14 year-old Khattu sits with her groom, Putto

Mohammed Mondrani's relatives cooking sajji staked between two fires

Bugtis perform energetic stick dance to Dhambiro accompaniment at wedding celebrations

The two stones of the mad poet, Toukali Must, lie next to the gnarled tree trunk shading the manhir where pupils and master of the Dera Bugti school shelter from the sun

Mondrani: Bugti boys are taught to read and write at home by an elder brother who attends school

learnt basic English. He had left school at fourteen and walked the forty-four miles to Sui seeking work and had started as an office boy, making tea. In between times he sat on the shady office verandah studying English grammar until, eighteen months later, he cut off his long ringlets, discarded the little embroidered cap and his bulky turban, and presented himself as a clerk. To celebrate, he got married and now he and his wife were living with Rahim's parents in their primitive juggi on the outskirts of the gas field camp.

He told me that he wanted to continue his schooling but there was no light in his parents' hut and once the sun set it was impossible for him to read.

I had planned to make a short documentary film showing the impact of 'civilization' on the Bugtis, and wanted somebody to take the part of a boy whose life was to be entirely changed by the discovery of natural gas and its development. Rahim seemed a perfect choice, and with the first rough story treatment, we'd already made the initial shots of Rahim at home with his parents, with a small brother re-enacting Rahim's early years.

Now, I thought, I could include a Chieftain's wedding if I could work Rahim into the celebrations.

It was at this juncture that the Bugti-Pathan conflict erupted and after the inquiry, the ringleaders were carted away in chains to await trial in jail. Unfortunately for my film, not to mention Rahim Bux's own future, this shy, inoffensive youth somehow managed to get caught up in the turmoil and was jailed with the rest of the trouble-makers.

After months in jail, he was tried and acquitted and returned to Sui, but in the meantime, the wedding of the year took place and I had to look around for another actor.

Aziz was the other Bugti clerk, about the same age as Rahim, but unlike him, he was a Mratta. In spite of this initial handicap, however, his natural brilliance and intelligence enabled him to graduate from the Dera Bugti school to continue his education in Quetta, the first of the Mrattas to achieve such a distinction.

It was July, the mercury in the thermometer reached the maximum of 120°F in the shade of my verandah and shattered the glass, and to avoid the fierce heat of the day we set off from Sui before dawn. The sun came up as we drove through the narrow Sher Posh Tank and encountered a handsome young warrior

mounted on a mettlesome grey mare, the two of them resting in the shade of the only tree for miles around.

Custom demanded that we stop to exchange the Hal and I asked Mohammed Mondrani where the horseman had come from.

'H-he h-has been w-watering his h-horse,' stuttered Mohammed, and when he saw my bewilderment, since there was not a sign of water anywhere, he offered to take me to the watering-holes.

From the shade of the tree we looked across an apparently smooth unbroken slope of dazzling white limestone, shockingly like the bleached bones of a skeleton thrusting through the dried skin of earth up to the very edge of the high, multi-coloured Lower Siwaliks.

Five minutes later we were scrambling across the limestone to the verges of a deep, narrow fissure at the bottom of which I could see fresh, clear, cool water imprisoned in a score of linking cavities.

'Always there is water here – it is called Truk, which means pools of water to drink,' Aziz told me.

We scrambled down to sample the water – and it tasted like nectar. Then we set off again with the horseman galloping madly behind us in the thick cloud of sand raised by the jeep, his face, whenever it was visible, one large grin. The smooth bed of the nullah favoured us and soon we pulled away to climb up the Bor and cross the wide plain. From time to time we encountered groups of men on horseback or camel, all heavily armed and dressed in their traditional finery, and since it was obligatory for us to stop and exchange the Hal with them all, it was more than an hour later before we reached the stream just outside Dera Bugti, and joined another group of wedding-guests washing off the worst of the desert sand. A shepherd boy on the cliffs above was piping his flock of sheep and goats as he led them down the steep cliff-side, breaking off now and then to continue a shouted conversation with an ancient greybeard who eventually appeared over the crest of the cliff from which Pir Chhattar had thrown himself in sacrifice.

At the Purana Darwaza, the first of the big gateways into Dera Bugti, Aziz jumped down to send a messenger ahead to warn the Nawab's household of our impending arrival. Then accompanied by a crowd of goggle-eyed children we bumped along by the stream, following the high, mud-brick wall until

we reached the handsome mosque and the Nau Darwaza. The Jemadar of the household was already hurrying from the main gateway, carrying a jug of cool lassi from the Begum's fridge, and thankfully I accepted a glass of the tasty curds while Aziz excused himself and went off to find his family.

The verandah of the guest-house was crowded with the bridegroom's male relatives, all Mazaris from the tribal headquarters of Rojan, sipping lemonade and looking acutely bored.

We were still standing by the jeep when Mir Ghulam Haidar himself bustled through the gateway and a moment or two later he was followed by Sardar Ahmad Nawaz Bugti dressed in the finest of transparent muslin shirts and very full white shalwar trousers. At that time, Mir Sahib, as Mir Ghulam Haidar was generally called, spoke little or no English so it was the Chieftain's brother who introduced me to the wedding party.

One of the guests was Ahmad's brother-in-law, Sardar Sher Zaman Khan Mazari, the youngest brother of the Mazari Chieftain and married to one of Ahmad's four sisters. Another sister was married to Mir Sahib's nephew whose father was also uncle to the Bugti Chieftain's own wife, so this was a somewhat complicated family affair so far as relationships were concerned.

The sight of a newcomer who was not a member of any tribe, aroused the wedding-guests' interest, perhaps all the more so since all the womenfolk were incarcerated behind high purdah walls. I found myself surrounded by a dozen or more handsome warriors with freshly-dyed hennaed beards and crisp white garments, some of them bareheaded but most wearing stiffly starched muslin turbans bound round gold kulla skull-caps in the Pathan fashion.

From behind the garden wall came the ceaseless throbbing of the enormous damama drums filling the air with an expectant vibration. Sensing my restless curiosity, Ahmad Nawaz offered to escort me round the town.

With Mohammed Mondrani diligently at my heels and Aziz, having greeted his family, now back again, we first visited the caravanserai next door. The large courtyard was crammed with kneeling camels and tethered horses and visiting tribesmen resting on saddles placed on striped mats in the shade of the verandahs. Outside, by the stream, camels were being watered, tribesmen, stripped to the waist, were enjoying the luxury of a bathe and washing their long ringlets, while under the shade of

the trees that lined the stream, the visiting Mazari musicians were beating on the huge damamas like half-melons, resting on the ground, or playing the smaller double-headed marrow-shaped dhol, slung round the neck.

Mazaris and Bugtis mingled in peace for once – the two tribes had been traditional enemies for generations and the wedding would, it was hoped, serve to reconcile still further the families whose ancestors had fought such bloody battles. I had visited the Mazari Chieftain at his headquarters and photographed him in the beautiful, tiled tombs of his ancestors – highly sophisticated compared with the tumbledown ruins that housed the tombs of the Bugti chieftains just outside the walls of Dera Bugti. And it was in the Mazari guest-house that I had taped the delightful songs of a blind court musican and his accompanying dhambiro player, and then photographed a quaint nineteenth-century frieze painted round the guest-house walls, depicting a Stephenson's Rocket type of train chugging along with a load of top-hatted or crinolined European passengers as seen through tribal eyes.

The wedding ceremony was planned for that evening, and we were all waiting in the guest-house garden, with several hundred guests thronging the narrow bazaars and gorging themselves on food provided by the Chieftain – all that was lacking was the bridegroom.

He finally drove into Dera Bugti late that evening and after hasty consultations with the tribal elders it was decided that the wedding had better be postponed till next day. In a subtle way this was a victory for the Mazaris.

'We Bugtis believe that it is lucky to marry on the even days of the month, but the Mazaris think the odd days are lucky. Tomorrow is an odd day,' Ahmad Nawaz told me dryly.

But although the Bugti hosts had given in gracefully on this point, it didn't prevent the celebrations taking place that evening, and after the sun had set we sat out on the pocket handkerchief lawn in the cool evening with yellow-flamed storm-lanterns on a couple of tables and as many tribal visitors as could squeeze into the garden, squatting round the edge of the grass.

It was a stag-party, of course – I hadn't seen a sign of another woman in Dera Bugti so far, but all the womenfolk would be concealed behind their high purdah walls. I didn't count, being a heathen foreigner.

The bridegroom, a strong hefty chap in his middle thirties, wore a European hair-cut under his stiff gold kulla cap and starched turban, and the cool muslin shirt and baggy shalwar trousers that seemed to be *de rigueur* for the male wedding-guests. All except one young Mazari with pretensions to sophistication, who sat stifling in a European suit with collar and tie, looking acutely hot, uncomfortable and out of place.

Bugti and Mazari dancers and musicians were ready in their respective corners and now followed a session of wild rythm that would make any 'pop' group sound like Victorian ballad singers performing in great-grandmamma's drawing-room.

Squatting on the grass, sedately enough to begin with, the Mazaris set the ball rolling with a pinch-faced old man who accompanied himself on the Sarinda, a complicated violin-like instrument, held like a 'cello and played with a bow to which a group of small bells was attached, providing a jingling accompaniment to every movement. The player sang a Persian song with a catchy melody, every one of the scores of verses breaking off with a sudden jerk as though he had been throttled.

Next came two men leading Mansoor, the blind court musician I had recorded at Rojan. Mansoor played the dhambiro, made from Pharphagh-dar (*Tecoma Undulata*) a longer and slightly more graceful instrument than the five-stringed Indian sitar. The second man played a nal flute, and the third, the double algozhar pipes, reminiscent of the pipes of Pan. They took turns in singing long, repetitive ballads extolling the virtues of Mir Chakur and other long-dead warriors. It was while Ahmad Nawaz was translating one of these songs for me that I learnt more about the famous Wazir-am-Kundi sword Akbar Khan Bugti had demonstrated to me and which was mentioned by name in several of the battle verses.

'The sword was captured by our great-great-grandfather, Bibrak the Third,' Ahmad told me. 'I can't remember who from, but I remember being told how our grandfather Shahbaz Khan, once had two camels stolen and chased the thief himself, with an escort of only two men, far behind him. He caught up with the thief, a man called Deli Jan, about twenty miles from here, on the road to Sangsila, and Deli Jan called out that he didn't want to fight his Chieftain. Shahbaz Khan took no notice so Deli Jan then said he would give the Chieftain the first blow and then he would

feel free to strike back. So grandfather galloped full pelt at the man and struck out but Deli Jan ducked at the last second and was unharmed. Then he cut off Shahbaz Khan's right ear. That made the Chieftain mad and he rushed at Deli Jan again, pulled him off his camel and killed him. After that, Shahbaz Khan always wore his turban tilted on one side to hide the fact that he'd lost his right ear.'

'But the sword, did he use that sword?' I asked.

'Oh yes, and always he used it in battle. It was supposed to have magical powers, you know. My great-grandfather Ghulam Murtaza was a strong man, very tall, like Shahbaz Khan – the sword is far too heavy for an ordinary man to use it effectively. Once Ghulam Murtaza rushed at an enemy sitting on a camel underneath a tree. Twice Ghulam Murtaza tried to strike the man – usually one blow would slice a man in two like a piece of cheese – but nothing happened because the man was a Fakir. So the Chieftain put the sword back in its scabbard, and rubbed it against the leather, then tried again and this time he cut the branch of the tree over the man's head, cut the man in half, then the camel in half and the sword stroke ended by slicing off a piece of the rock underneath the camel!'

Ahmad clapped a hand to his head suddenly, looked at his guests furtively and lowered his voice to a conspiratorial whisper.

'I've just remembered where that sword came from – Bibrak captured it from the Mazaris.'

We both looked at the wedding-guests, the Chieftain and his brother and kinsmen, tall, virile-looking men any of whom might well fancy himself as the owner of such an ancestral treasure.

'They've often wanted it back – it's rather a sore point between us,' Ahmad added. 'Maybe we'd better not talk about it any more tonight.'

But later on, safely out of earshot, he explained that the Bugtis had been feuding with the Mazaris for generations, from the time of the sixteenth-century Bugti Tumandar, Akif, the first of the Bugti chieftains to raid Mazari country and whose two sons were killed in a counter-raid. Ding-dong battles of retaliation continued up to the 1830s when Bibrak the Third captured the Wazir-am-Kundi from Wazir Mazari at the battle of Putti when Bahram Khan was the Mazari Chieftain. After this a wary truce existed

until the recent inter-tribal weddings that were, it was hoped, cementing a lasting peace.

A sudden burst of ear-splitting drumming diverted us as the Mrattas now sprang into a whirling stick dance side by side with a similar circle of Mazaris. Each man grasped a pair of sticks on the ends of which small clusters of bells were fastened; they knocked their sticks against those of alternate neighbours, twisting all the time and moving round in a wide circle. The beating of the damama and dhol drums quickened, the men's arms flailed as they circled, and wild grunts, cries and shouts rent the night air. The many-pleated full-skirted kirta overcoats bellied out like parachutes, long ringlets flew in the wind and the Mrattas gyrated in fantastic contortions, kneeling, falling to the ground, rolling over and over, but all the time keeping those sticks beating without missing a stroke, faster, faster, louder and louder.

Then as though somebody had turned a switch, the drums stopped and the men dropped exhausted to the ground, amid appreciative shouts of 'Wah, wah,' and 'Shahbash' from the audience, and wild applause from the men and boys perched perilously on the high wall of the mosque overlooking the garden.

I felt exhausted and dry in the mouth and when I was offered some 'Taragh' I accepted eagerly.

A Mratta brought out a tray with a lemonade-bottle filled with a pale golden liquid and I accepted a glass of what I supposed to be a soft drink.

'Be careful – it's quite powerful,' warned Ahmad as I tilted the glass.

Powerful it was. It nearly blew the top of my head off and the wedding-guests roared with delighted laughter at my reaction.

'Taragh is made from the seeds of saunf – that's aniseed,' Ahmad explained as the laughter died down. 'We make three kinds here in Dera – this, the golden, is the best quality, then comes the pink and the poorest quality is green.'

This Bugti equivalent of absinthe was quite delicious but I switched to something less lethal, put a fresh tape on my recorder and settled down expectantly as Mansoor appeared once more with another companion, the two men both carrying dhambiros.

And now came my introduction to the mystical Pirozani Nothanis as the blind musician and his Mazari companion began

to accompany two Fakirs who emerged from the shadows to sit quietly on the grass. The audience was suddenly hushed, even the crickets seemed to hold their breath expectantly as the two Nothanis crouched together with their heads hidden under their long pushti shawls and the dhambiros began to thrum very softly, with an insistent, throbbing, monotonous repetition of the same few notes over and over again. It was insidiously invading every pore of my body, every cell of my brain, until it seemed to fill the entire world. Then Mansoor began singing the Fakiri song, his voice rising and falling hypnotically.

As he sang, the two Fakirs trembled as they hid under their pushtis until gradually their entire bodies were shaking and vibrating and the men groaned and moaned as though tortured. Finally they flung off the shawls and sprang to their feet with shouts as though of agony. They were both bare-headed, one, the taller of the two, a big hefty fellow called Dil Murad, had shaved his head, a most unusual sight among Bugtis, but perhaps a wise precaution as I saw later. His companion, Mandruf, shorter and more delicately built, wore his long black hair in ringlets to his waist.

After some leaping in the air, accompanied by ear splitting groans, somebody brought out a brazier of glowing coals, and Dil Murad plunged both hands into the brazier, snatching up the almost white-hot embers and stuffing them into his mouth to crunch them as greedily as a child eating candy, and with just as much apparent enjoyment.

It was as though eating the coals had triggered off the next phase, for Dil Murad suddenly whirled round, turning upon Mandruf and butting him in the stomach, tore at his long hair and finally threw him to the ground with a great deal of noise and flailing arms and legs. The two men rolled around, shouting and pummelling each other for some moments, with choking, strangulated cries, both of them foaming at the mouth.

Now I noticed, for the first time, several crude stretchers laid on the ground at the front of the crowd. The two Fakirs were on their feet again and now their attention was directed to the recumbent figures in the stretchers.

'Those men are sick,' Ahmad told me, 'and the Fakirs have come to try and cure them. The Fakiri tune is always played on dhambiros just for this one purpose. When the Fakirs hear it they

go into a trance and then they have the power to drive out the devils that have possessed the sick and are causing their illness.'

So I was witnessing the casting out of devils!

Were the two Fakirs epileptics, I wondered? Their antics looked remarkably like those of men having a fit, but I wasn't able to confirm or deny this. Now, instead of pummelling each other, they fell upon the men lying helplessly on the ground, and still screaming and foaming at the mouth, the Fakirs pulled at the patients' hair, pummelled them and shook them violently until, quite suddenly the Nothanis collapsed exhausted on the ground.

I was watching the two Fakirs being carried off by willing assistants and I didn't see what happened to the sick men on the ground, but the next time I looked, the stretchers had disappeared.

'What happened? Were the men cured?'

Nobody could answer my questions – somebody said that he'd seen several of the patients get up and walk through the gateway, others that stretchers had been carried away. Certainly it seemed a kill-or-cure method of shocking the invalid into good health – or the grave!

One of my biggest regrets is that, in spite of all my plans and intentions, in the commotion of the wedding celebrations I never managed to follow up the Fakiri dance and discover if any of the patients had in fact been cured – and if so, of what diseases.

Anything following that dramatic, fantastic scene in the starlit garden would have been an anti-climax and the crowd began to drift away while the Mazaris and I went inside the guest-house. I was feeling emotionally exhausted, almost as though the Fakirs had drained all my energy with their own wild antics. In the little yard by the side of the guest-house, Mratta cooks had been busy over steaming cauldrons and spits, preparing dinner for us. Food for the hundreds of other visitors was cooked in the Chieftain's more spacious courtyard within the town walls.

Inside the guest-house, servants were waiting with delicately-spouted silver ewers of rose-scented water and soap which they offered to each guest before the meal. We all ate with fingers, by far the most enjoyable way of eating the rice mixed with raisins and almonds, onions and chicken, the curries and the hunks of sajji with several kinds of bread – kak, nan, papadums, chupatties; bowls of creamy curds, some plain, some spiced with onions and herbs, vegetables, curried lamb and chicken – all

could be eaten with pieces of nan or chupatties folded to scoop up the liquid.

At long last, hardly able to keep my eyes open, I said good night and went off to bed with the wild strains of the Fakiri tune still throbbing through my brain.

Next morning, early, came the traditional sporting events held in the wide, sandy nullah half a mile from the walls of Dera Bugti. Crowds were already gathered along the top of the twenty-foot high nullah bank and, to my surprise, there was a group of women among the spectators. Then, just as I was thinking the miracle had happened and purdah been relaxed, I realized that these were Mratta women from the slave community concenttated at Dera Bugti, and as such, enjoying far more real freedom than the pure-blooded Bugti women hidden indoors.

The male relatives of both bride and groom were bunched together in an animated group – only the groom was missing, still recovering from the previous night's party and doubtless reserving his strength for the ordeals to come.

As I filmed the horse and camel races, the old men's race and the small boys' race and Sardar Ahmad Nawaz presented cash prizes to the winners, standing in for his brother the Chieftain, he told me enthusiastically, 'I'd like to start annual inter-tribal games here to help unify all the clans. Once the various sections get together peacefully, but with a chance of competing against each other, I'm sure a lot of the old antagonism would die out.'

But in the years that were to follow, hopes of any such unity seemed to grow smaller and smaller as the tribe was reft by feuds that began at top-level and permeated every section of its structure.

Now, as the sun rose high in the sky, the athletics were called off and I climbed down from the roof of the land-rover where I'd been filming the races. Hot and dusty and covered with sand, wearing old jeans and a shirt, I was beckoned urgently by Mir Sahib and since he spoke no English and my Urdu is very basic, I wasn't at all sure where he wanted to take me and begged a moment to wash and change.

'No, no, you are very well as you are,' he assured me, adding something about wedding gifts and now I remembered that the previous evening he had asked me if I'd like to view the gifts.

'It will be in the open, in a courtyard, and you will have to sit on the ground so you should wear old things, trousers,' he had told me.

So we walked through the Purana Darwaza in the high mud walls and down a narrow lane, through the first gateway into a small, walled purdah yard. From the concealed entrance of the larger courtyard beyond, I heard the sound of women's voices singing and suddenly I realized that I had been brought to the bride's house. I wanted to run back and change from my work-worn garments but it was too late. A pretty, plump, gentle-faced woman in a white Punjabi-style qamis dress, embroidered in black and red, worn over white shalwar trousers, came to meet me and took my hands between hers. Mir Sahib muttered something I couldn't understand, and left us.

Smiling, his wife led me round to the shelter of a wide verandah now jam-packed with some forty or fifty women of all ages and heaven knows how many children and babies in arms. A maid-servant by one wall pulled the big cloth punkah hanging from the ceiling, stirring the hot air over the heads of the seated wedding-guests. Another girl was gently pushing what I took to be a bundle of clothing suspended from the ceiling and only much later did I realize that there was a sleeping child hidden in the white cloth.

In the middle of the cushions and rugs on which the women were sitting cross-legged, a wooden chair had been placed, rather like a throne, and after some polite cross-talk I was persuaded to take my place, never more conspicuous and never more inclined to creep in a corner and hide at the sight of the fabulous jewellery and colourful dresses of the other women.

A little girl called Sabse (which I'd always thought meant 'vegetables') stood behind my chair, waving a fan over my head with great zeal and one of the women held up a small baby to pull at my hair curiously.

I wondered which of the girls was the bride. Two exceptionally attractive young women sat in front of me, dressed in gay scarlet doputta scarves, silk qamis and coloured shalwar pyjama trousers. Gold jewellery studded with turquoise, pearls, rubies and emeralds, dripped from ears, nose, forehead and neck. Great jewelled rings adorned fingers and bare, hennaed toes. Big eyes outlined in khol, stared at me curiously – but neither of these was the bride. They were both from Rojan, relatives of the Mazari bridegroom.

Along the house wall sat a row of little girls about twelve years old, with pretty, blank faces staring in complete, bored disinterest at the proceedings. A young girl in a red doputta and qamis busied herself among the guests, carrying jugs of sherbert and lemonade and Mir Sahib's wife told me she was a younger daughter. The bride was sitting hidden indoors, in the equivalent of the tribal chhapar, not allowed to take part in any of the festivities at her own wedding. She would remain alone in a darkened room until it was time for her to dress in her red wedding garments, and she wouldn't even see the scores of wedding gifts.

These were all wrapped up inside several enormous bundles called Bushkari. Fashioned like huge envelopes out of quilted silks and cottons in orange, green and shocking-pink stripes, they were fastened by golden tassels and pearl buttons and looked like something out of an Arabian night's dream.

Now a couple of Mratta maid-servants began to untie the golden tasselled cords; another group had formed a circle in the hot, sunny courtyard and while one of their number stood in the centre, beating a rhythm on a dhol drum slung round her neck, the others danced the graceful joomer, swaying and dipping their arms in unison, pointing their toes and singing, apparently quite oblivious of the fierce rays of the sun. In a corner of the yard sat Mansoor, the blind musician strumming his dhambiro, the only male outside the immediate family relatives, allowed inside the purdah quarters.

All round the walls of the courtyard tents and shelters of peesh mats had been erected to house the women guests and their servants, and the whole place was a bustle of noise and chatter and busyness. Small boys, not yet old enough to wear trousers, helped the little girls hand round glasses of water poured from goat-skins hanging from nails in the walls. An old crone, her grey hair dyed an uneven red with henna, pushed a wooden cradle painted in the typical reds, oranges, yellows and greens of Kismir work. Tiny black and white birds flew noisily among the rafters while below them mothers, including the mother of the bride, sat suckling small children ranging from tiny babies to three-year-olds.

A monkey-faced, wizened little old Mratta woman stood in the middle of the verandah by the opened Bushkari from which a girl handed up each gift in turn. The old woman raised the gift high in the air with one hand for all to see, while calling out the

name of the donor in a wild, harsh, cracked voice, strong and almost ferocious, together with a description of the gift.

'Ker sirriya – ka pushka!' she'd call, holding up sets of baggy trousers, tunic dresses and long veils. After the twentieth set I lost count; each was of different coloured brocades, silks, voiles, cottons, plain, printed, embroidered – enough for a lifetime and, of course, since the garments were not figure-fitting there was no need to worry about sizes. The bridal gown itself was held up for inspection; this was a traditional Bugti pushki of deep cherry-coloured lawn embroidered in yellow and blue. There were lengths of material to be made up into costumes, dozens of pairs of slippers with turned-up toes, embroidered in heavy gold or silver thread, sturdy walking-shoes, though the bride was unlikely ever to need these, embroidered bags, a fitted beauty case which was actually a small attaché case covered in red velvet and filled with Bourjois 'Nuit de Paris' perfume and cosmetics. This last gift taxed the descriptive powers of the puzzled announcer who finally described it as a 'cigar-box'!

Talcum powder and soap and lengths of cloth unrolled to reveal pieces of bark and twigs called muswag, used, like neem twigs, to clean the teeth; cut-glass scent-sprays, bottles of heavy oriental scent, heavy silver bowls encrusted with decoration, silver trays and goblets from the silversmiths of Lahore, cut-glass goblets – one set of which was already being used by the guests; blankets, embroidered bolster-cases, quilts, towels, floor rugs, handwoven in Baluchistan and Iran, scarlet bolsters with golden tassels – and jewellery.

Small wooden chests bound with iron bands and heavy locks were opened to disgorge a dazzling display of treasure; six gold finger rings set with rubies, emeralds and turquoises; an exquisite golden ornament for the nose inset with pearls and rubies; four gold thumb rings and four more for the toes; silver-bell anklets, fabulous jewelled ear-rings, necklaces, bracelets and amulets by the dozen.

Embarrassed, I pushed my own modest gift of a bracelet and a bottle of scent to the bottom of my bag. But we'd seen only half of the gifts so far, those from the groom's family. Now came the bride's family gifts.

These were packed in a series of stout metal trunks and wooden chests painted in gay colours and also heavily padlocked. More

clothes were produced from these, including, this time, the bridegroom's wedding outfit which included a fine starched turban, transparent muslin shirt, baggy white trousers and leather shoes. All kinds of household goods including cooking utensils and crockery, rugs, bedding, glassware and more fabulous jewellery. No wonder Mir Ghulam Haidar had spent some £300 on his wedding gifts alone; the dowry of £450 which would normally have been paid by the Chieftain, since the bride was related, had in fact been paid out of Sardar Ahmad Nawaz's private purse since his brother was travelling in Europe, and as if all these were not enough, more gifts of crisp, crackling new rupee notes were held up, amounting to nearly £250.

Finally I got up to go. All the gifts had been unpacked and the baby, who had spent the past hour examining my hair, had also managed to acquire some exceedingly sticky sweetmeats which she generously shared with me, mis-aiming most of the time and wiping them on my head or neck. I was hot, hungry, thirsty, in need of a bath, and very sleepy.

Back at the guest-house the crowds were gathering in the garden long before sunset. The musicians and dancers were the first to come, gossiping, smoking hookahs and drinking sweet, milky tea while they waited.

Then, as more and more spectators settled down, musicians began to play and the dancers were soon whirling around in their own boisterous version of the joomer. Pointing their toes as though in a ballet, waving their arms and dipping as they twisted they shouted out staccato cries of 'He! Tchiscol wah!'

The Mazaris wore languattas, pieces of ankle-length cloth tied, sarong-fashion round their waists, for Rojan, the Mazari headquarters, was just across the border in the Punjab where this garment, so much more economical in cloth than the shalwar trousers, was commonly worn by the country-folk.

While the singing and dancing was in progress an old man circulated among the guests, collecting contributions for the performers and holding up the rupee notes as he called out, 'From Mir Sahib, ten rupees for the musicians' – 'twenty rupees from Sardar Sahib for the dancers', so that there was no chance of getting away with the loose change in your pocket without losing 'face'.

After dinner, a repeat of the previous night's lavish feast, we

gathered again outside in the garden. The chairs had been cleared and cushions had been spread on the grass where we sat or reclined while still more singing and dancing regaled us until about eleven o'clock. The bridegroom, dressed in the finery I'd seen earlier in the women's quarters, sat nervously smoking, every now and then taking off his turban and putting it on again until the mulla, a pensive old man, arrived to sit by himself at one side of the guests.

It must have been an hour later when three elderly men entered the garden and approached the mulla to confer in whispers. Two of the newcomers were really decrepit, bent almost double and hardly able to totter along. The third, a middle-aged man, was the bride's uncle who was acting as her 'temporary brother'. The father of the bride, it seemed, had no part in the ceremony at all.

The 'temporary brother' who must be a relation, who by religious law could not possibly ever marry the bride, acts on her behalf throughout the wedding, arranging the question of dowry and marriage settlement – the dowry is usually tied up in such a way that in the event of a divorce, this money would revert to the bride for her own use.

After the whispered consultation the three men went out of the garden once more. They were to walk back into the walled town to Mir Ghulam Haidar's home where his daughter was waiting, completely veiled in her room. 'Temporary brother' being a close relative, was allowed into the women's quarters, and so were the two ancient men who were acting as witnesses, and here the bride was asked if she agreed to the marriage. She would refuse to do so twice, accepting the third time after pressure from relatives singing the praises of the handsome groom; in essence, just the same as the simple tribal ceremony I'd witnessed in the desert.

All this took another hour, for the old men were hard-pressed to walk backwards and forwards so often, and while we waited, the musicians played in a more subdued mood, the groom fidgeted with his turban and smoked innumerable cigarettes and I remembered the bags of boiled sweets I'd brought from Sui, intending to give them to the children at the bride's house, but which I'd had no opportunity to take that morning. I brought these out now and before I had time to hand them round, one guest, who had changed from his European suit to European shirt and white

trousers, hiccuping loudly, reached out and relieved me of the bag. He picked out two sweets from the bag and presented these to the mulla, made a pretence of offering the bag to the other guests while ensuring he held them out of reach, and then sat down, pocketing the lot which he ate throughout the rest of the evening.

I was almost asleep in the dark shadows of the garden when the two old men and the 'temporary brother' came back to make their final satisfactory report to the mulla. The groom took off his turban once more, and wiped his forehead with the starched end.

Beckoning Mir Ghulam Haidar and the bridegroom to his side, the mulla sat between them, conferring quietly, asking the ritual questions before announcing that the bride had agreed to the marriage and ending with a recital of surahs from the Koran. Now the man and the girl who had never seen each other, were man and wife.

This was the signal for servants to bring round a handful of sugar to be presented to each guest, for the music to burst into shattering chords and for the mulla to go home.

Another half-hour passed before the groom finally got up very quietly and, without any fuss, walked out of the garden with a single companion to escort him to the waiting bride.

And then, while the blind musician still strummed on his dhambiro, the garden emptied and I said good night to the few remaining guests and went to bed.

But all through my dreams I could hear the strains of the dhambiro – not the subdued melodies I'd heard tonight, but the wild, intense Fakiri tune of the previous evening.

8 *Masori Hospitality*

'Caverns vast and deserts idle,
Rough quarries, rocks and hills
Whose heads touch the heavens. . . .'
(Popular Poetry of the Baloches)

OF ALL the journeys I made in Bugti territory, the most fascinating was that which I made in May 1958 with Sardar Ahmad Nawaz Bugti when he toured the Nothani and Masori areas, holding jirgas on his brother's behalf while Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti was in Europe.

The farthermost point was Philawagh in the Masori country, right in the north-east corner of the Bugti area, and it was arranged that Mohammed Mondrani should come with me. But even Mohammed had to leave his gun behind on this journey, for he would be going to an area where he was unknown, the member of a rival clan where the sight of his arms could only denote one thing – that he came as an enemy.

It was intensely hot that first night which I spent in Dera Bugti, ready for an early start next day, and the charpoy was taken out of the guest-house bedroom and placed on the lawn where the wedding had been celebrated.

About half past four in the morning I was roused by the sound of the mulla calling the Azaan from the mosque next door; half an hour later the driver got the jeep out of the garage and began revving it up and by half past five, Sardar Ahmad Nawaz had arrived, dressed in a cool white muslin shirt and shalwar trousers, a revolver strapped round his waist, and the Bugti jeep painted bright scarlet, was loaded up. I had brought my ciné-camera and tripod, three still-cameras, plenty of film and my little feather-pillow, and that was about all there was room for since the jeep was to carry nine people plus all our baggage and arms!

Breakfast with Ahmad in the garden consisted of iced cakes, sugared corn-balls, fried eggs, strong tea, nuts, raisins, chupatties and sponge cake. After this formidable mixture, we squeezed into the jeep, Ahmad at the wheel, and drove out into the freshness of the morning.

Our route took us up through the narrow Tang where the slave climbed to freedom and out into Marav, passing groups of women and girls already up and leading their donkeys and camels the eight miles to the Chhattar stream to collect the day's water.

The journey we were to make now would normally take weeks by camel or horse and rarely had it been made in a four-wheeled vehicle. Our jeep load had the air of a party of schoolboys let out on holiday as the six tribesmen sitting at the back, Mohammed Mondrani, forlornly unarmed, among them, chattered and laughed and poked their guns perilously in all directions. I sat in front with Ahmad Nawaz who was driving, and Mir Ghulam Haidar's son, and I felt as though I was really shaking off the shackles of civilization as I sniffed the dewy-fresh morning air and watched the rising sun tint the slatey-grey mountains from blue to purple and then palest pink.

Small groups of men were gathering in the harvest of ripened corn in the wide valley, and storing it in semi-underground shelters of mud-packed wicker-frames, while about half-way across, we turned to our left to begin climbing the surrounding hills, passing a stone-walled reservoir, now empty.

'That is where we tried to make a dam to collect the rainwater!' Ahmad told me. 'We lined it with stones and clay and after about six years, it began to retain water for as long as six months at a time.'

It was a rare example of Bugti enterprise – indeed, there was to my knowledge, only one other attempt at making a dam, and that was in the Philawagh area we were to visit.

Stark rocky crags, precipitous drops, deep crevasses surrounded us as we climbed the mountain-side. 'We made this track in 1945, with every section of the tribe helping to clear the rocks and level it – it took about five months and each subsection is responsible for maintaining its own section of the road,' Ahmad explained, and now I learnt that the place I'd seen spelt as Philawagh was actually pronounced 'Pelabug'. Spelling Bugti names is difficult because

of so many variations in pronunciation; 'b', 'p', 'w', all seem to be interchangeable; so do 'r' and 'l'.

The entire front suspension of the jeep had long ago succumbed to rough treatment but this didn't stop us bumping downhill at a breakneck and hair-raising pace, past a row of small cairns built of rounded stones and topped with a flat-surfaced, upright stone to mark the site of an ancient battle. This was the area known as Traki Marav where, in 1845, General Napier bottled up Islam Khan the Bugti Chief, who managed to escape to Khetran.

The tiny fertile valley at the foot of the hill was full of men threshing and bagging the harvest. The Chieftain takes a proportion of harvest from land he has inherited but which is worked by tenant farmers and this proportion depends on whether the land was won in battle with the help of the farmers or their ancestors, or whether it was freely given by the Chieftain, and also on the difficulty or otherwise of working it. Easily-worked land near water, such as Marav, which was a gift, yields a quarter of its harvest to the Chieftain whose accountants supervise the collection and division of the grain. But at Philawagh, far off, won in battle and not very fertile, only one-seventh of the harvest goes to the Chieftain.

Much of the soil is salt-laden, while cultivation is handicapped still further by a hot sulphur-laden wind known as the Julot or Simoon which literally burns up vegetation in its path. In our garden at Sui I've seen a swathe as well-defined as if drawn by a ruler, and as devastating as though a flame-thrower had been used, cut through the garden, leaving shrivelled, burnt-up brown hedge, grass and flowers in its wake. Tribesmen dread encountering this wind in the desert for it can cause deep cracks and cuts in the skin that, without the aid of modern medicine, soon turn septic and refuse to heal. Camels and horses have died from exposure to the wind which can sweep over the desert with little or no warning, changing its direction in a matter of seconds from East to West.

August is the month for the short, sharp downpours that follow heavy sand-storms, blackening the sky and blotting out the sun and all known tracks, distorting and completely changing the landscape, and so fierce they can lift up a laden jeep and deposit it yards away. The torrential rain that follows turns the land into a

muddy morass, flooding valleys and nullahs in minutes and stopping as suddenly as if turned off by a tap. When the sun reappears, it draws up the salt from deep below the surface of the land whose meagre covering of top-soil has already been blown and washed away. However, the Chetri and Sawri harvests of autumn depend on these short summer rains that come in July and August, with the exception perhaps of the 150 acres of irrigated land round about Dera Bugti and farther along the same valley, at Sangsila, where the Chhattar stream is diverted to water the fields.

The principal harvest, called Rabi, is collected in the spring; this is usually wheat which is sown in October or November and reaped about May or the beginning of June. The Chatri and Sawri consist of jauri, a kind of corn which is sown at the time of the July and August rains and harvested in October and November.

Now, leaving the valley with its harvesters, we began climbing once more over the Kechhi Kalat, by way of a really terrifying track that seemed almost vertical.

'This is Bar Boozh Dreep – it means "unloading of the camels pass" because we have to drag the camels up here and carry the loads ourselves!' Ahmad Nawaz grinned as we all climbed out of the jeep, leaving him to negotiate the twists and turns of the hair-raising track.

Once at the top, however, we got our first view of the Lope Valley and could see how well it was named, for its shape exactly fitted the descriptive title of 'noose'. On a small rise on the opposite side of the valley I could make out a group of mud-brick rectangles that were the Serani Levy Post, close to the Marri border, and strung out along the track were the Levies themselves in their grey knee-length tunic shirts and matching shalwar trousers, topped by their own white turbans, every man bedecked with arms. As we got out of the jeep the men came forward in turn to bend swiftly and touch the ground at Sardar Ahmad Nawaz's feet, then to clasp his hands between theirs in salutation.

John Jacob of Jacobabad, and Captain Robert Sandeman (later to be knighted) first thought of enlisting the aid of the very men who caused the British the most trouble back in the mid-nineteenth century. Sandeman was Deputy Commissioner of Dera Ghazi Khan on the borders of the Punjab and the Bugti–Marri hills and in 1867 he enlisted eleven Bugtis and stationed them at

Rajanpur to work as guides, frontier patrols and trackers, paid by Government grants.

Another eighty were enlisted in 1871 and were stationed on the borders of Sind and the Punjab, but this didn't stop the tribes raiding the great trading caravans passing through the Bolan from the plains to Quetta and on to Afghanistan – the Bugtis and Marris even raided Kalat, their Overlord's State. So Sandeman came into the picture again, a determined courageous, far-sighted and obstinate young man who trekked alone and unarmed into the heart of tribal territory, known at that time as 'the country of rebellion' and regarded as a death-trap, to negotiate single-handed a treaty with the tribes. In Philawagh I was to meet old Masori Bugtis who spoke with admiration of Sind-e-man Sahib and pointed out to me a hill where he was said to have met with their leaders, talking of him as though he was alive still.

In 1882 the Levy Corps was reorganized and border posts at Gandoi, Shahpur and Goranari were entrusted with duties carried out by military troops until then.

In 1905 the Bugtis held eleven Levy Posts, and then, as now, each man chosen from each subsection, served for a period of three months at a time, while the Risaldars in charge, who were appointed from the Waderas of each sub-clan, took turns to command for four months each year.

The British always held their opponents in the highest regard, as this quotation from an early *Gazetteer* confirms:

'The Bugtis are reputed to be the bravest of all the hill tribes and physically some of the finest men among the Baluch; intellectually they are perhaps the least bigoted of all Baluchis and like the Marris are active, hardy and capable of traversing great distances without fatigue.'

The way they'd scrambled up the Bar Boozh Dreep, laden with guns and equipment, was a fairly good indication to me of their hardiness and activity

Mir Ghulam Haidar's son was to remain at Serani for a few days, supervising the harvesting accounts on the Chieftain's behalf. But his place in the jeep was taken by Jamak Pirozani, Wadera of the Pirozani Nothanis, a tall man with a luxurious black beard and a foxy expression. Jamak came from Sangsila along the Chhattar Valley, not far from the famous Naffusk Pass, where I'd been astounded to find a deep azure pool filled with

fish and shadowed by a fantastic natural bridge shaped by the wind and the weather from the ridge of hills enclosing the valley. Luscious pink oleanders flanked the stream where it flowed into the pool and made this one of the few places in the territory that could truly be described as beautiful. Others were dramatic, fascinating, fantastic, but Sangsila was a true beauty spot.

As we were introduced, Jamak Pirozani now looked at me with narrowed eyes and pursed lips and then announced bluntly, 'I don't know who you are but if you are a friend of Sardar Sahib's then you are welcome to come and stay at Sangsila!'

Surrounded now by scores of Bugtis all laden with arms, we were swept along to a mud-brick manhir with thick pillars supporting a reed-thatched roof. A charpoy with a brilliantly coloured patchwork saddle-cloth stood in one corner and Ahmad Nawaz and I were solemnly escorted to the seat of honour. Some of the wildest looking tribesmen I'd seen, since the riot at Sui that is, pushed and shoved to get as near as possible to us, blocking the archways, squatting on the bare ground, standing in every corner.

The elders were in the foreground, since this was to be a jirga session, or at least, the preliminary to it. One of the most striking of these was squatting by Ahmad Nawaz's feet, an old man with straggly white beard and ringlets escaping from a bulky turban of twisted cloth tied to show a corner of his scarlet, mirror-inset cap. His face was deeply wrinkled but his intent brown eyes were alert for all their heavy lids. He wore the old, traditional smocked kirta over his tunic shirt and was a man to take your eye in any crowd.

'This is Sobdar Nothani – his father fought with my great-grandfather Ghulam Murtaza at the battle of Chambri – between the Bugtis and the Marris, up near Philawagh,' Ahmad told me now. 'Though Sobdar wasn't born at the time, he remembers his father telling him stories of the battle which was fought about the 1870s.'

Old Sobdar grinned toothlessly as he heard his name and that of his father mentioned, and he needed nothing more to start him off on a series of anecdotes which were translated to me as he went on.

'My father was Mewa Nothani and he had twenty-seven sword wounds from that battle. He collapsed on the battle-field and

asked for a pillow, so a wounded Marri was dragged by one leg and Mewa's head was placed on that Marri's stomach. But presently the Marri became conscious and he lifted his head to ask who had won the battle. Mewa Nothani recovered consciousness at that time too, and he said that he didn't know, but he called a Bugti to him, and complained that his pillow was moving . . . the Marri had dragged himself away. But the other Bugti chased him and beheaded him and pulled his body back so that Mewa could rest his head on the man's stomach again. They said to him, "now your pillow won't move" '.

Now it was Jamak Pirozani's turn. 'My great-grandfather fought at that battle too,' he interrupted. 'His name was Yar Mohammed and he was a descendant of Pir Suhri. He was fighting by the side of Ghulam Murtaza and Haibat Khan, the great-grandfather of Haji Habibullah Khan Bushkwani Masori . . .'

'Who's to be our host in Philawagh,' Ahmad explained.

'They were all together fighting side by side at Chambri when five Marris attacked Yar Mohammed and were just about to cut off his head when Ghulam Murtaza who was also being attacked by many Marris, shouted out, "Don't be afraid – all the Marris have run away now!" When the men attacking him heard this, they believed him and they ran away, but for the rest of his life, Yar Mohammed had that scar on his neck where they started to cut off his head.'

Jamak laughed as though this was a great joke, then he went on quickly, seeing Sobdar was ready with another story. I had asked what they were fighting about and now he told me that Ghulam Murtaza had raided Kohlu in the Marri country, and stolen two thousand head of cattle and the successful raiders were on their way back coming by way of a place called Barkhan.

'That's where Islam Khan the Second spent his nine years' exile away from Bugti country and there he married one of the Khetran Chief's daughters. They are Pathans,' Ahmad explained. 'My father also married from the same family and my brother Akbar was born in Barkhan – when my mother was carrying him, she went on a camel all the way back to Barkhan so that he would be born there.'

Because of this marriage-relationship, the Marri Chief asked the Khetran Tumandar to plead with Ghulam Murtaza to give them back their stolen cattle. Ghulam refused to do this but offered

five hundred head of cattle as a face-saver for the Khetrani family. Meanwhile, other Marris had gone ahead to lay in wait for Ghulam Murtaza as he returned from Chambri to Philawagh, and here the great battle took place. Both sides were camped within a mile of each other.

'That night, when Ghulam Murtaza was talking to Haibat Khan and to Mian Khan the Jaffrani Wadera – these three Waderas were all great friends and always fought together,' Jamak took up his story again, 'the Tumandar decided they would rest that night after the day's fighting, and they would not fight again until the next day. But my great-grandfather gathered his own section of about 150 men and he drew lines on the ground with his sword as he galloped all round his men. He struck his beard and he swore a great oath that he would fight that night even if Ghulam Murtaza would not, and that he would give the land enclosed by the marks of his sword, to Pir Suhri if they won the battle. So then Ghulam Murtaza and Haibat had to join him to save their honour as Mewa was already leading the charge. They did win that battle and even today the money from that land is given to the Fakir who looks after the tomb of Pir Suhri.'

I could have sat on all day listening spellbound to these old warriors' tales recounted with tremendous dramatic impact, wild gestures and flashing eyes and accompanied by appreciative cries from the audience, and I was dreading the time when Ahmad Nawaz would decide he had to get down to business. But there was to be another story from old Sobdar Nothani who was quoting a verse in his high-pitched voice.

'Ke marria ke talhe ishtar,
Muzhaire Sher Ali khustar.'

'When good luck leaves somebody,
Even Muzhair can kill Sher Ali.'

This proverb originated at the time of the Chambri battle when Sher Ali, the Mukadam, that is, the Marri Tumandar's chief representative, a man of huge stature, over six foot six inches tall and tremendous strength, encountered the Bugti dwarf, Muzhaire, Ghulam Murtaza's court jester.

Sher Ali was cutting down Bugtis wholesale and Ghulam Murtaza, himself surrounded and heavily outnumbered, called out to Muzhaire to kill Sher Ali.

'How can I fight that mountain?' asked Muzhaire, but Ghulam told him to catch hold of Sher Ali's legs and pull them. In the midst of the hand-to-hand battle, nobody noticed the dwarf darting between their legs as he wriggled right to the middle of the battling tribesmen, seized hold of Sher Ali's legs and gave a big tug, pulling him off balance. In an instant he was down, dropped his sword which Muzhaire picked up and wielded energetically as he chopped the huge Marri to pieces.

'That's why we say that if you're unlucky, then even Muzhaire can kill you,' laughed Ahmad.

The listening Nothanis laughed with him, slapping each other on the back and nodding and adding their own anecdotes to cap this. I felt as though I was back in medieval times, when history was kept alive by the bards and court-minstrels, handed down by word of mouth. Bugtis remember every detail of past battles for the same reason, and these stories are recounted over and over again, so that they become an integral and vividly depicted part of every tribesman's life.

As the voices rose and fell and the excited gestures added to the animation of the scene, I sat making notes and drawing thumbnail sketches of the fascinating characters surrounding me, particularly of Sobdar and Jamak.

Standing around Sobdar were four strikingly handsome middle-aged men with glossy black beards and ringlets, four of his fifteen sons.

'He's had four wives and twenty-one children and his youngest, a girl, is only six years old now,' Ahmad gave me a brief biography and I took another admiring look at the old warrior – 'muy hombre' as the Spanish say, for at a conservative guess he must have been eighty.

I got him outside the manhir with his sons and tried to coax a smile while I took his photo, but he obstinately kept his lips firmly closed. Finally he admitted, a little self-consciously, that he didn't want to smile as he had no teeth!

One of Bugti territory's three schools was held normally in the manhir we were now using – a small class of boys taught by a

cousin of Aziz, the Mratta clerk who worked in the Sui office, and the boys now filed up with their teacher to pay their respects to Ahmad Nawaz; the other two schools were the one at Dera Bugti and a small class taught by a mulla, at Philawagh. When the boys reached the age of nine or ten they were usually taken away to help with the cattle or the land.

Now at last the tribe was ready to present petitions – preceded by the exchange of the Hal. Ahmad began by reciting all the news from the Mondrani and Kalpar areas and then he was told the local Nothani news. Meanwhile we were brought sweet, milky tea and later on, after the petitions had been presented, came sajji and curry served as we sat on peesh mats on the ground.

We were just getting ready to leave on the next stage of our journey when Sobdar hobbled up to me, holding out a fistful of rupee notes.

'He wants you to take fifty rupees to buy a sirree,' Ahmad grinned at me, adding, 'he says you're the prettiest girl he's seen for a long time.'

Since certainly *all* the girls no matter what they looked like, were kept well out of sight, that wasn't saying much. No doubt he felt I ought not to go around without the customary sirree over my head, but I explained as tactfully as possible that I didn't wear these shawls.

'Well, then, take it for something else,' he insisted, holding out the money again.

At last I managed to convince him that I would have to ask my husband's permission first, so he tucked the notes away carelessly and then brought out what I thought was a powder-horn for use with the muzzle-loading guns, and shook a small quantity of dark brown powdered leaves and twigs out into my palm.

'Take it, take it,' he urged and indicated I should put it in my mouth and chew.

Somewhat dubiously, but not wanting to refuse his second offer, I did so, with every Bugti eye fixed on my actions. Mohammed Mondrani was peeping between the Nothanis, one hand covering his mouth as though to stifle his mirth and when he saw my expression as I began chewing, he exploded with laughter. Everyone else burst out laughing too as I spat out the mixture quickly.

'It's what we call "nass" – it's like powdered tobacco,' Ahmad laughed as he tried to explain.

I'd had the same kind of trick played on me in Afghanistan when the villagers helping to dig the prehistoric city of Mundigak, had urged me to try what they called 'naswar'. All the Nothanis chew nass before going into battle, and some, but not all, other Bugtis do the same. 'It makes them wild,' Ahmad said – apparently the tobacco is mixed with the burnt, powdered twigs of a leafless plant called Geeshtar, a narcotic, and Nothanis as a whole were real addicts.

It was only half past ten when we piled into the jeep again – I felt I'd been up an entire day already, but the sun was high in the sky and it was getting very hot.

Waving good-bye to the Nothanis, we drove through a pass leading to a weird series of bare valleys flanked by grim grey mountains. The mountains had the appearance of having been finger-painted by some giant who left the impression of whorls and whirls of his finger-tips on the upturned sides of the great rocky masses. Other hills looked as though waves of water had been caught and frozen on their sides. Folds of jutting, bared limestone with loose grey shale projected into the valley which was a symphony in donkey-grey and donkey-brown, with not a sign of life anywhere.

It was good to get out of that eery, primeval atmosphere – I wouldn't have been surprised to see a dinosaur come round the corner – and we groaned up another steep hill to reach the top of Burzain Wad which I discovered meant a steep cliff, with four more chezals at the top. From here we could see Masori territory, a remarkably green-looking valley compared with the moon-scape we'd just come through. Going down Burzain Wad we had to get out and walk once more; this was another place where camels had to be unloaded and we found the jeep had almost as much difficulty as camels as Ahmad reversed to get round the corners, bumping and jolting over the stones and at places with one or two wheels overhanging the steep drop.

At the bottom of the cliff we were met by a group of Masoris who had ridden the twenty-five miles from Philawagh to form an escort for us. Their horses were tethered by the track, but just as we drove up a white mare broke away, frightened by the unusual sound of the jeep, and shot off into the distance. We gave

chase but this only spurred the animal to greater efforts and over the tortuous terrain it easily outdistanced us.

Somehow we found room in the jeep for the horseless Masori, to discover that he was our host, Haji Habibullah Khan Bushkwani Masori, a charming old gentleman with a long nose and twinkling brown eyes, his hair cut most unusually into a Pathan bob and dyed bright henna, while his beard and moustache remained white. The fact that he wore a green turban to mark his pilgrimage to Mecca also distinguished him from the other Bugtis, and in the few days we were together I grew very fond of this old, and for a Bugti, much-travelled man.

He told me that he had made his Mecca pilgrimage with Mian Khan, Wadera of the Jaffrani Masoris and each had taken one of his wives with him.

'But never again, it was a lot of trouble, travelling overland through Persia with two women,' and he gave me a second long, appraising look.

His womenfolk had, of course, travelled swathed in black bourkas with all the accompanying nuisance of making sure not a millimetre of female, clothing and all, should be revealed to eyes other than those of their husbands.

'My mother has twice made that Haj,' Ahmad broke in. 'But she wants to go again.'

We drove across sandy river beds, up their steep banks, across miles of dried, alluvial mud baked into curls like wood-shavings or broken Easter-eggs, and through clumps of the dwarf palm called peesh, their slim leaves fanning out like sword-blades straight from the earth with no trunk or main stem. The peesh in this area grows mainly at Zin, Philawagh and Serani and is carried all over Bugti and Marri territory for use by the tribesmen.

'My mother's people, the Khetranis, have a slightly different marriage custom from ours,' Ahmad told me, after pointing out the clumps of peesh. "The woman, the bride, hides out of sight of the groom but close enough to hear what is being said by the mulla and then she runs away and hides in a clump of peesh. The groom has to go and find her and as this is at night-time, the women usually hide pretty close to the camp and if they see the groom going the wrong way, they make a little noise to attract his attention. But once some Bugtis were riding near a wedding-

party one night and they heard a rustle in the peesh bushes. They leapt down from their horses with their swords in their hands, thinking there were bandits laying in wait for them, but it was only a new bride hiding from her groom!

'Of course, once they had a look, they couldn't avoid seeing the girl and there was quite a fuss before it was straightened out – there was nearly another feud!'

We had reached the dried bed of the Philawagh River; far away, across the farther bank I could see dim blue mountains reaching to the sky. I was looking at Siah Koh, the black mountain, which formed part of the Marri-Bugti border. Siah Koh was over 5,500 feet high and looked almost as tantalizingly attractive as Koh-i-Malik-Siah, the Mountain of the Black King, that had drawn me twice to the wild tangle of mountains forming the meeting-place of Afghanistan, Baluchistan and Iran.

The Marri frontier actually came to within four hundred yards of us at this spot – just the other side of the wide river.

Ahmad Nawaz himself rarely came to this area and wasn't sure of his directions, so all our passengers, plus the mounted escort, gave us instructions with much flinging out of arms and pointing of guns, every one suggesting a different route and all of them apparently forgetting that a horse can manoeuvre rocky paths and narrow bunds between cultivated areas far more easily than can a laden jeep, versatile though that vehicle may be, and we had to divert from the normal tracks considerably.

But at last we drove into Philawagh – two or three mud-brick buildings and a tiny mosque that formed the entire community which was, in fact, no more than another levy post. The Thana or Levy Headquarters consisted of a mud-brick wall round a hollow square with a small manhir at one side and a two-roomed mud-brick building near the entrance. There was also an ancient fortress with a large hole gaping in its side, and that was Philawagh.

Piercing the thick mud-brick walls of the little house in the Thana courtyard were a number of holes at different levels, rather like portholes; peesh mats hung over the sides of the verandah, shading it, while reed and brush shelters for horses and their riders ranged along one wall of the yard.

A fine charpoy with white and gold painted legs stood on a

striped rug under the manhir, with a cane armchair and a table. My arrival was apparently unexpected and caused great excitement, for it seemed I was the first non-Bugti woman – in fact, the first woman – to enter the levy post.

Blissfully unaware, at that time, of the stir my presence was creating, I went into one of the Thana rooms to change into a clean shirt, leaving Ahmad Nawaz surrounded by scores of Masoris touching his feet and clasping his hands.

Ahmad had pointed out that the door of the room I was using, wouldn't stay shut and had no latch, but now Mohammed Mondrani, so far kept very much in the background, came into his own, and proudly took up his position outside the widely-slatted door, guarding me from intruders.

The room was empty of furniture but piles of dusty school-books, slates and chalk lay around on the floor and I realized I was in the school-house.

I had opened my case and was about to put on my fresh shirt when I became aware of a pair of eyes stolidly following my every movement. A small boy had practically wedged his head into one of the lower 'portholes' in the outer wall, and would no doubt give a blow-by-blow account of this strange new creature's movements to all his friends.

Feeling a little fresher, I went outside, found a second charpoy already placed with a second chair for my use, and joined the crowd. I had no idea what kind of status the Bugtis thought I possessed to travel around with their Sardar – I obviously couldn't be a wife or I'd be in purdah and in Bugti territory it certainly wasn't customary for tribesmen to flaunt their girl-friends quite so openly, so I must have caused a certain amount of speculation. But as far as I was concerned, Ahmad Nawaz was the soul of discretion and tact throughout the trip and that journey stood out for me uniquely as one in which I suffered the least embarrassment of any of my wanderings. I may sound ingenuous but for once I was able to relax with the feeling that I was travelling with an exceptionally knowledgeable, tolerant and charming brother. And, believe me, that really is something unusual and rare to find among Europeans. But a Bugti's honour, particularly where women are concerned, is like his hospitality, beyond question.

Once again Ahmad Nawaz was surrounded by all the tribal

elders, the two Waderas in the positions of honour by his side. Haji Habibullah's small, solemn-eyed son of about ten years old, stood with his father and Ahmad asked him why he wasn't at school.

'The boy laughed.

'How can I be, when you have moved into our school?' he pointed out logically enough.

The Thana had all the air of a Foreign Legion outpost, with a normal population of fourteen men plus their Risaldar in charge. But today there must have been hundreds of Masoris come to meet their Sardar. The clan boasts some five thousand men and is the best-armed of all the Bugti clans. The only man authorized to collect taxes on the Chieftain's behalf, and who ranks next to him, even above Sardar Ahmad Nawaz, is known as the head Mukadam, hereditary leader of all the clans, Jan Mohammed, Masori. But he was old and neither he nor his sons wielded as much influence over the tribes as had their ancestors. All real power, particularly with the Masoris, was now in the hands of the three Waderas, Haji Habibullah Khan, Bushkwani Wadera, Gul Hassan, Noghani Wadera – at that time ill in Quetta – and smooth-skinned, fairly short, black bearded Haji Mian Khan, Wadera of the Jaffrani Masoris, who had accompanied Habibullah Khan on the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Sardar Ahmad Nawaz had to watch that he spent an equal amount of time with each of the Waderas and distributed his attentions evenly among each section of the clan, lest he be accused of favouritism.

I sat quietly in the hot afternoon, watching the fierce, bearded faces and every now and then catching a glimpse of a strangely subdued Mohammed Mondrani of Mut as, bereft of his arms, he, like me, kept in the background.

He was as good as in enemy territory now, and for once he managed to avoid his usual arguments and quarrels. I only hoped he would be able to keep up this unaccustomed meekness throughout our stay in this alien territory.

After the initial greetings and the exchange of the news, the Masoris began drifting away, some no farther than the walls of the compound where they squatted down in small groups by their tethered horses.

Some were busy fashioning a 'por', an ingenious home-made

hookah which Bugtis who are travelling without carrying a water-pipe, manage to construct with the aid of a hollow straw. First they poke a small hole in the sand, pour in a little water, place the straw in the water and pat the sand around it. Another small hole is made a few inches away, working the sand with a finger. This hole is filled with tobacco, which is then lit. The smoker takes a mouthful of water, pulls on the straw, spits out the water and somehow or other, the smoke from the tobacco is drawn up through the straw with the water. It doesn't sound as though it would work, but it does.

Before the jirga was to start, we were given a meal, the usual sajji, nan and curried goat which was far too costly for any but special occasions. The sajji was washed down with water poured from a leather goat-skin called a 'mushk', hanging from a nail in the manhir walls, and I watched Haji Mian Khan, the Wadera of the Jaffrani Masoris, strain the water with great ostentation through one end of his turban. The result was a thick, coffee-coloured, soupy liquid which I doctored with a little brandy in the hope that the alcohol would kill off the worst of the bugs. It certainly seemed to work for I never suffered any ill-effects although I ate and drank exactly the same as the Bugtis, with this single addition.

Almost before we'd finished eating, when I was thinking a siesta wouldn't be a bad idea, the men began to collect around us, squatting on the floor and edging closer and closer as late-comers pressed them from the rear.

It had been reasonably cool in the shade of the manhir until the tribesmen jammed themselves into every corner, blocking out the air, and soon it was suffocatingly hot.

The programme set the pattern for the next few days, and rarely did I find myself without several score Bugtis closely observing my every move.

Jingling harness provided a constant background noise as more and more men, bristling with weapons, forced their way through the crowds to greet Ahmad Nawaz.

I was admiring one newcomer's particularly luxurious black beard when Haji Habibullah told me of a Masori with a really tremendous beard.

'This man took a bet that he could steal more than twelve combs without the shopkeeper noticing,' the Haji told me. 'This man

The Nau Darwaza, 'New Gateway', of the walled town of Dera Bugti, with the covered bazaar seen just inside. The heavy doors are closed from sundown to sunrise.

As evening falls inside 19th century Sui Fort, Mondrani Bugtis listen to Nal player accompanying singer of dastanagh songs

Wandering Bugti families hammer at the joints of the pipelines carrying water to the Sui gas field and catch the drops in basins held under the pipes

asked for different things to be shown him, and every time the shopkeeper turned his back to fetch them, the Masori stuck another comb into the back of his beard.' Haji pulled out a sandalwood comb and demonstrated the technique by sticking it underneath his own white beard.

'This Masori kept on talking all the time and when he left that shop, do you know, he had eighteen combs in his beard and the shopkeeper never even noticed!'

Everyone thought this was a great joke, particularly Jamak Pirozani, sitting near my chair with his pushti twisted under his armpits and across his raised knees in the comfortable figure-of-eight. Most of the cases Sardar Ahmad Nawaz was to hear would be tried in fact by the Waderas, advised by the elders, with the Pirozani Wadera and the Sardar merely acting in an advisory capacity. But there were two cases that could only be tried by the Sardar himself, and these involved the Masori Waderas, Haji Habibullah Khan and Haji Mian Khan.

They were long, complicated issues concerning land and dealings in horses which I found difficult to follow. But I realized how quickly a feud could develop from apparently trivial incidents, remembering the difficulties we had on arrival in Sui, when my husband and I wanted to hire horses for our own use.

I had no idea then of the inter-clan rivalry that existed. Bugtis were Bugtis, I had imagined, naïvely enough, and I was soon to learn how wrong was that conception.

For the first few weeks we had hired odd horses here and there but it was difficult to find one strong enough to take my husband's eighteen stone until Mohammed Mondrani of Mut said that he had such an animal.

A few days later Afzal, Jamadar of the Kalpar clan and a handsome young fellow, arrived with my horse. Afzal represented the Kalpar interests in Sui and also worked in the gas-field hospital as a sanitary assistant. Riding down the road towards us came Mohammed Mondrani on a huge, well-nourished mare called Belahay which seemed exactly what my husband needed. But I wasn't prepared for the furious shouts, the fist-shakings and the contorted faces suffused with anger as the two tribesmen met at the gateway. Mohammed was stammering with rage at Afzal who was yelling at the top of his voice and it was obviously only because

the men were now forbidden to carry arms inside the gas-field that shots or sword blows had not already been exchanged.

Afzal appealed to me, almost weeping with mortification.

'If the Burra Sahib rides this horse of a Mondrani, think how shamed all the Kalpars will be! This is Kalpar land. It would be a great disgrace for the Burra Sahib to ride a Mondrani horse here. It would mean a war between the Kalpars and Mondranis,' he went on dramatically, and it was obvious from the attitude of the two men that he wasn't exaggerating.

Now I remembered the difficulty we always had when sending out for fodder for the horses we hired. Afzal would go out in the land-rover once or twice a week and return with a load of unappetizing looking cane called boosa, that they'd managed to persuade the horses to eat instead of their usual raw meat. We had grown a small grassy patch after several attempts, and thought the horses would appreciate cropping this luscious greenery, but not a bit of it. They appeared to have no idea that this was edible, and sugar, carrots and apples were treated with the same disdain. In a country where such delicacies are virtually unknown, horses are raised to be carnivorous.

When Afzal explained he had to drive to Dera Bugti or Gandoi for the fodder, he had been asked why he didn't collect the boosa from much nearer sources.

'But those are in Mondrani territory; we cannot collect boosa from there,' he had explained, as though to a dull-witted child.

So eventually we had decided not to ride at all, rather than arouse jealousy between the clans.

Sardar Ahmad had come to our rescue by sending two fine horses from the Masori country, a huge, half-Arab mare in foal, and a gelding for me. It took them and their escorts a week to make the journey and when they arrived, the horses were petrified at the sight of the gas plant, of bungalows and trucks and the snaking silver pipes of the gathering system that made them shy even from far off, and they never did get accustomed to our scent

During the very hot weather we had ceased to ride at all, thinking to spare the horses, but in spite of this, my gelding collapsed and for several days lay without eating or drinking. There was no veterinary surgeon within hundreds of miles and

seeing my distress, Mohammed Mondrani had stuttered out a request for a tin of Dalda, the vegetable cooking fat that took the place of clarified butter, and was very popular in Pakistan. Bugtis had only recently encountered it, with the coming of the Sui shopping centre where employees could buy subsidized foodstuffs, and I admit I harboured unworthy suspicions at this request, particularly since it was for a huge seven-pound tin.

However, I watched while five Mondranis held on to the horse and forced open its mouth, and Mohammed, with his turban off, long hair streaming over his shoulders, scooped up fistfuls of the fat and pushed it half-way down the animal's throat.

Miraculously enough, the treatment had immediate results and within half an hour, Akbar, as I had named my horse, was on his feet, eating and drinking normally.

And now, here I was in these highlands where the horses had been bred, and learning for the first time that they had in fact been given us by the charming, red-headed Haji Habibullah Khan himself.

'But you must not give human names to your horses – that is a great insult to the man,' Haji Habibullah told me. I asked him for suggested substitutes.

'Well, Mir Buz, that is one good name for your horse, that means a Hawk Chieftain. And Koonj is crane (it is used in Baluch poetry to symbolize women bathing) – that would be a good name for the mare. The foal should be Marvi, that means an arrow in flight,' he added.

That evening, Ahmad Nawaz asked if I'd like to have a bath.

After hours of sitting stiffly, and the previous dusty hot journey, I thought this was a wonderful idea.

'In the normal way the levies here use the well outside the mosque,' he told me, 'but with so many Masoris in Philawagh today this would be rather difficult for you.'

I agreed, since there was no kind of shelter round the well.

Haji Mian Khan interrupted. 'I have a Farsi well on my land let her bathe there,' he suggested. 'There is a wall round the well and it would be very secret for her.'

So about half past five that afternoon I was introduced to a magnificent grey mare adorned with gay orange trappings, a single rein with jingling chains attached and a high-pommelled wooden saddle covered with a patterned, hand-woven cloth. The

stirrups were heavy, wide metal ones like those I'd used on ranches in New Mexico, and as I had no boots, my leather chapli sandals slipped through these, catching my instep on the metal. But I was so delighted to be in the saddle and out of the suffocating airlessness of the manhir that I didn't even notice the discomfort as I rode out with an escort of some twenty or thirty armed Masoris, several foals running with their dams, small boys, two to a horse – but Haji Habibullah's young son sitting proudly alone on his chestnut mare – and Ahmad Nawaz with the three Waderas by his side and my towel and soap tied up in the end of his pushti.

We were all in high spirits, like children let out from school and only poor Mohammed Mondrani had to remain behind in the Levy Thana, very much the outsider in this Masori stronghold.

We jingled along for some four or five miles until we spotted a group of fortified mud-brick houses within a mud-brick wall that surrounded Mian Khan's estate. There are no villages, only fortified communities in this area, and families and all their relations by marriage live in the same community.

About a quarter of a mile from the fortifications I saw a low mud-brick wall about three feet high, and behind it the dome of a small mosque.

'Here we are,' announced Ahmad Nawaz cheerily, swinging off his horse. I got down with some misgivings, wondering how I was going to bathe here. The entrance to the well was through an opening by the side of the mosque, and a group of men had gathered by the mulla sitting on the platform outside the mosque. Several camels were being laden with skins of water and a stream of women and children carrying goat-skins and earthenware pots were approaching from the fortress, obviously to fetch their evening water. Two or three were already filling their vessels at the well and they and the newcomers were shooed away while I was taken inside.

A blind-folded bullock was walking round and round turning the Persian wheel that drew up cans of water to spill out into a hollowed log channelling the water to a small pool. There was a flat stone in the bottom of the pool and the residue of the water overflowed and found its way out through another hole in the bottom of the mud-brick wall.

It was quite obvious that the low wall wasn't going to afford much in the way of concealment and it looked as though I'd have to be satisfied with washing my extremities only. But everything had been thought of. My Masori escort was stationed at intervals some distance from the wall, with their backs to me and instructions to keep all comers away. Ahmad took the rest of the Bugtis round to the front of the mosque where I could hear them exchanging the Hal while I squatted down by the pool and pulled off my shirt.

It was without any doubt the most wonderful bath I have ever experienced. I had been travelling in extreme heat through dusty, sandy country and hadn't done more than rinse my face and hands in muddy warm water. This was cool, clear, clean and utterly delicious and I had to fight the temptation to linger.

I finished at last and went out to the front of the mosque to join the Masoris sitting with the mulla, while Ahmad Nawaz took his turn at the well. Already the sun was setting behind the purple hills, casting deep pink shadows on the little mosque and throwing the ibex horns nailed to the entrance, into sharp relief. Mian Haji told me how he had shot the ibex in the distant hills that I could see – 'they are in Gurchani country,' he told me with satisfaction at having poached from a neighbouring tribe, when what promised to be a long story was interrupted by the approach of a weird figure wearing a tall, black-pointed cap like a bishop's mitre, adding to this effect by carrying a long crook in one hand. A polished black, half-gourd begging-bowl hung from a cord round his neck. At first I thought this was a woman, since he wore a dirty white pushti over his head, and the 'mitre' was jammed on top of that, but he turned out to be a wandering Malang or holy man, with the special ability to search out and catch poisonous snakes.

The evening air was delightfully cool as I rode back feeling indescribably elated and tranquil at the same time. I longed to be able to freeze this instant in time, to savour it for ever as one of the most emotionally satisfying of my life. To the north the deep blue Baragh mountains divided Bugti and Marri territory while to the east a stone marked the boundary of the Gurchani territory – 'where I have often shot wolves,' Ahmad told me. In the distance shimmered the Kup range dividing the Kalchas and Philawagh plains and forming the southern boundary of Marri territory.

'There is a tunnel there, it is only as high as your knee,' Haji Mian Khan told me. 'It leads into a huge cavern and another big tunnel and it can hold four hundred men. It goes right through the mountain.'

It was one more place to add to the list of those I hoped to visit, and it sounded a likely spot for signs of prehistoric man. I still hope that one day I may be able to return and explore the Kup range tunnel for myself.

9 'Tigers' on Trial

'We are the Rinds of the swift mares;
Now we will be below you and now above;
We will come from both sides with our attacks
And demand a full share of all you have. . . .'
(Popular Poetry of the Baloches)

BACK at the Levy Thana I found the two charpoys had been moved to the centre of the compound, separated by striped, hand-woven rugs, a table and two chairs. We all sat down on the beds, chairs or ground and Haji Habibullah produced a portable radio, the first ever seen in the area and one he had purchased only a week or two earlier, in Quetta, so it was still very much of a novelty here.

An aerial was draped over the manhir roof and Ahmad Nawaz twiddled the tuner on Haji Sahib's behalf, until some western dance music blared into the still air. This was received with marked reserve by the audience around us.

'What *is* that box?' one fierce-looking Masori asked, and Haji Habibullah explained that it brought news from all parts of the world.

'Good. Ask it how my brother is keeping. He has gone to Shikarpur Hospital,' was the somewhat baffling demand, and poor Haji's prestige sank as he had to explain that this seemingly simple request was impossible to fulfil. To these men, news was only news when it concerned them personally.

By now it was quite dark, but there was no need of lanterns or torches. A huge yellow moon rose in the deep blue sky providing us with more than enough illumination. Ahmad Nawaz was still trying to find news in Baluchi for the benefit of the hundreds of 'Rinds of the swift mares' seated around us, when a young man burst out of the crowd to fling himself at the Sardar's feet.

Dramatically he tore off his turban, his ringlets falling about his shoulders, and picking up handfuls of dust he rubbed them into his hair and wailed bitterly.

He was the offspring of one of those forced unions between Bugti men and Mratta women, and he was accusing a nephew of Haji Mian Khan of stealing six hundred rupees' worth of goods after failing to seduce his Mratta wife.

If his accusation was true, his case was unlikely to get an unbiased hearing from local tribal elders. But the Sardar could be depended on for justice, and the distraught man gradually quietened as Ahmad Nawaz persuaded him to wait until morning when his case would be heard.

Wolves howled in the near-by hills, camels, hobbling outside the Thana walls, grumbled and grunted as their stomachs provided a continuous noisy rumbling background accompanied by the pleasant sound of tethered horses munching and whinneying. Some of the Masoris who were meeting here, perhaps for the first time in months or even years, went on talking together all through the night. And behind the high-pitched, excited voices I could hear the distant plaintive strains of a nal flute. Ahmad Nawaz had moved his charpoy to the far wall but a score of recumbent forms lay on the ground around my bed, including Mohammed and Haji Habibullah.

It seemed a long time before weariness overcame the acute discomfort of the knobbly, knotted string-bed, covered only with a thin peesh mat and a worn horse-blanket, but I fell asleep at last, with a cold mountain breeze whistling round my ears.

At half past four in the morning, the mulla's voice roused me as he called the faithful to prayer at the mosque across the road. A few of the sleepers around my bed stirred and moved like ghosts across the courtyard, but most of them snuggled into their pushtis and snored on for another hour.

By five-thirty the first rays of dawn lightened the sky and I too rolled off my charpoy and remembering Ahmad's warning to take a torch with me, to search out scorpions, snakes or the poisonous spiders he called Jherrambs, I picked my way through the tamarisk bushes with great caution. These Jherrambs frightened me out of my wits with their long, greyish, mottled bodies, long heads with a kind of beaky nose and baleful expression, their two

pincers and huge reddish hairy legs, but fortunately I didn't encounter them among the bushes.

Mohammed brought me a brass bowl of cold water which he poured over my hands while I splashed my face in a sketchy apology for a wash, and then went into the school-room to change into a fresh shirt. By this time the charpoys had been moved under the manhir once again and we sat down to breakfast off milky, sweet tea with a sediment of sand in the bottom, poured straight from a kettle, and accompanied by pieces of fried nan. Seeing my expression as I watched a thick, greasy skin form on top of the tea, Ahmad came to my rescue now and ordered sabs chai – green tea, without milk or sugar.

'But that is not tea at all, with no milk, no sugar,' complained Haji Habibullah, feeling his hospitality was being rejected. Nevertheless, I drank it eagerly and with such obvious enjoyment that from then on, he always gave me green tea.

A little local colour had been arranged for my benefit and by eight o'clock well over a hundred mounted Masoris were waiting in the nullah, fully armed as if for a raid, with Ahmad Nawaz for once wearing a turban and himself carrying a gun, mounted on a fine grey mare and directing operations.

I crouched by a tamarisk bush with an ancient 16mm ciné camera with not even a turret-lens, much less a zoom. I had to unscrew the lenses to change them and focus by measuring everything most carefully with a tape beforehand, marking the various distances with stones.

After returning from an archaeological expedition in Afghanistan, where I had been using it, I had taken the camera to a well-known photographic store in London's West End to have some of the sand cleaned out and the camera overhauled, and had not seen any results from it since then.

We had a couple of trial runs while the Masoris charged down the nullah, yelling and waving swords and muskets, shooting into the air and stampeding generally amid clouds of sand. Then with my nose in the sand, trying to get dramatic, low angle shots, I filmed away. Fortunately I wasn't aware that whenever I moved my camera the film went out of focus, for in reassembling the lenses the London store had put one lens in back to front, and loose, resulting in complete distortion!

Riding back to the Thana with the Masoris we were joined by

a couple of mystified wandering Doms or minstrels who rode up to meet us, their slender-necked dhambiros over their backs.

'Look, there is a phatphagh tree,' Haji Habibullah pointed out as we rode down the nullah together and he showed me a small, twisted tree, not unlike an olive, with tiny leaves but brilliant orange and coral flowers. This is the tree whose tough but elastic wood is used to make the dhambiro. I'd never seen such a tree before and got off to have a good look. Close by was a small bush called a ghandahoe. 'Those berries make a drink just like coffee,' I was told, and I began to gather some of them, thinking they'd make a change from the unpalatable tea.

'Don't worry, you shall have a whole bagful,' I was promised and sure enough I was presented later with a bag of dried-up berries that looked like herbs and certainly didn't taste of coffee.

Back in the Thana the party-spirit still prevailed as somebody suggested dressing me in a Masori turban. Haji Habibullah gave me a little scarlet embroidered cap like a Dutch bonnet, set with mirrors to put on first, carefully arranging it so that one corner showed artistically on my forehead while he bound the white turban tightly, leaving a long loop under my chin. Next I had to have a tooled leather bandolier of bullets made like a waistcoat, the back studded with mirrors, and the whole effect was completed with a tupak rifle, an outfit which aroused great applause from the watching Masoris.

'Now you are a real Bugti,' laughed Ahmad Nawaz.

'Now you are one of us – you can lead us in a raid against the Gurchanis over there,' suggested Haji Habibullah, pointing to the far mountains.

'Yes, we can get some fine sheep from those Gurchanis,' added Haji Mian Khan, a gleam of battle sparkling in his eyes.

He described how his grandfather, Ghulam Hussein then Mukadam of the Masoris and head man of all the Bugti clans, had been killed by the Gurchanis in the famous Harrand raid of January 1867, one of the rare occasions when Bugtis and Marris had joined forces and how his death had been avenged by the killing of a hundred and twenty Gurchanis!

It was tempting to fancy myself as the leader of such a spectacular band of warriors but I begged off until my next visit, when I promised I would wear a white shirt and shalwar so that I could really look the part.

Meanwhile, the serious business of the jirga trial was about to recommence and now the chairs and table were transferred to the shade cast by the fortress wall.

By now I had been accepted by the Masoris and I felt more relaxed as I moved among them with my cameras. Everyone talked at once, arms waved passionately in the air, and tempers were apt to be frayed quickly. Haji Habibullah was particularly hot-tempered and very stubborn into the bargain. Once he'd made a statement nothing would induce him to change it, even though he knew he was in the wrong. Every now and then, not trusting himself to speak, he'd stamp off to the mosque across the road, say his prayers and then return slightly subdued to continue the argument.

The Mratta wife who'd been tempted in vain by Mian Khan's nephew was still alive, unlike a Bugti woman in similar circumstances who would have had to hang herself no matter how innocent she might have been.

Mian Khan's nephew was a sulky-looking, black-browed youth who denied the charges hotly, and several times during the hearing both parties adjourned to the mosque to give statements sworn on the Holy Koran. His accusers were the tall young Mratta who had dashed up to Ahmad Nawaz the night before, and his grandfather, a fragile-looking old man whose hands shook tremulously and who sat with a small boy clutching his tattered clothing; Haji Habibullah Khan, their landlord, lent his support to their story and finally, Mian Khan's brother, father of the accused boy, refused to back up his own son, saying that he had always been a trouble-maker and that prison would be good for him. The boy had made the mistake of boasting of his exploits to another Masori who now came forward to confirm this, at which the nephew broke down and confessed his guilt.

'We will take him to Dera Bugti to wait in the jail there until the sessions at Sibi, and then we will find out exactly how much money he took. He will have to refund double the money he stole, as well as go to prison,' Ahmad told me.

In the meantime there was no question of the youth being handcuffed or confined to a jail. On the contrary, he still stood freely with the other Masoris, joining in the discussion and, during the following days, adding his own opinion to the general verdict on other cases on trial.

Ahmad Nawaz sat all day long in his chair listening quietly, very occasionally putting a question, asking the neutral Jamak Pirozani for his opinion and shushing everyone when the shouting became too excitable. He heard some dozen cases in all, one of them concerning an old man who argued most fiercely with his Sardar and presently flung out a hand in my direction.

'He's asking for your opinion – he won't accept what I tell him,' laughed Ahmad.

It appeared that this old man, who looked about eighty, had an even older sister who had just been widowed. He wanted to fetch her back from her husband's family and marry her off again; as her brother he would receive the bride money since their parents were dead.

"The price for a bride has increased in the last two years and this man could get at least two thousand rupees for his old sister, but she doesn't want to come back. She wants to stay with her children in her late husband's home. And her brother is asking me to give an order for her to return to him.'

'I'd think she deserved a little peace with her own children at her age,' I said. 'Why should she be separated from them just to please that greedy old man! I don't suppose she'd see anything of the money and since she's old, I imagine all she'd get from a new marriage would be the hardest jobs around the place.'

Ahmad agreed but discreetly toned down my verdict in his translation.

The old man looked at me crossly.

'You are taking her part because you are a woman,' he said peevishly. 'All right, then, I won't sell her again but she must come back with me. I shall go and catch her. She is waiting there among the trees,' he added with a grim look that forebode no happy welcome home for his sister.

Another case provided an opportunity for detective work on the part of the jirga. A group of youths had made a habit of robbing a small store and on the last occasion, thinking they were cleverly disguising their footprints, they had torn pieces of cloth from their turbans and wrapped them round their feet. (Expert trackers like Mohammed Mondrani of Mut can identify a man from his bare footprints.) But as the boys had walked along the nullahs and through the bushes, scraps of cloth were left behind on twigs and bushes all along their route, leading the trackers

directly to the stolen goods found hidden under a heap of wheat stored inside a brushwood juggi. Also, unnoticed during this night-time escapade, a box of stolen needles had broken open, spilling its contents to leave yet another trail.

Once again voices were raised in heated argument and finally some tiny pieces of cloth were produced. One of these had a fine green thread along one edge, quite unusual, as most turbans were of pure white cloth. It was comic to watch the face of the swaggering young man as his turban was removed and the tell-tale green thread matched up with a jagged piece torn from the end. It had never occurred to him not to wear his usual turban today and he looked absolutely shattered as his Sardar compared the two pieces of cloth with such damning conclusions.

Now followed estimates of the value of the stolen goods, and the order for the thieves to restore twice their value to their victim. On this occasion, half the money was counted out then and there and paid over in Ahmad Nawaz's presence, the official recorder noting it in a huge ledger. Then the party adjourned to the mosque where they swore on the Holy Koran to pay the remainder of the money by a certain date.

All this time I had noticed an extremely poor old man in ragged dirty kirta and tattered turban, sitting on the ground a little apart, listening to all that went on but keeping himself busy the while. He was Karim Bux, a Noghani Masori who had pulled up a whole bunch of the sword-like peesh leaves from the nullah that morning, and spent the rest of the day plaiting these into umpteen pairs of sawaz, primitive sandals held on to the foot by a Y-shaped thong. He worked so swiftly that I could hardly follow his movements with my camera as he made two pairs especially for my husband and me. He kept them back to soak in water and soften the harsh leaves for our tender feet. Sawaz are excellent for climbing the shaley hills around Philawagh, especially if they are dampened to give an even firmer grip on the loose stones. Costing nothing to make, they are fashioned by the dozen and easily carried around to replace old sandals as they wear out.

While old Karim Bux sat making his stock of sawaz, the jirga trials continued. Two of the cases heard demonstrated the tremendous importance placed on the ability to produce a family. One man was accused of impotency by his father-in-law, since he'd been married seven years without having any children. The

old man wanted his daughter freed to marry again, but since a woman can't divorce her husband under tribal law, he was trying to persuade the jirga that the husband should be forced to divorce his wife.

The husband was an unusually progressive young man who had actually attended a clinic in Jacobabad and announced that he was now cured. Father-in-law pooh-poohed the suggestion that such a thing was possible.

'All right,' announced Sardar Ahmad Nawaz, 'Let the married couple come and stay in Dera Bugti in a house that is provided for this purpose. I will give you six months to prove that the husband is indeed cured. The wife's father will come too and he and a Raheja Bugti will also live in the house and be witnesses that no other man goes near the woman.'

The sequel to this was that only a few weeks after taking up residence in the Dera Bugti house, the husband came beaming to Ahmad Nawaz to give him the good news that all was now well, and to make quite sure that the Raheja Bugti hadn't been bribed by the husband, a messenger was sent to question the wife herself.

'Oh yes, my husband is now a complete man,' she answered proudly.

Apparently charges of impotency are quite common, hence the provision of a special house for the married couples, and suitable elderly witnesses who, in the case of Mratta couples, must actually be present in the room when the husband proves his virility.

Another case concerned a woman who had committed suicide and her family were claiming compensation from her husband.

The women had been widowed after fourteen years of childless marriage and had then remarried. Her second husband discovered to his delight that she was a virgin but his wife, in great distress, had made him promise not to tell a soul that her first husband had been impotent. If he did, she swore she would kill herself because of the disgrace reflected on her first husband. But the new husband couldn't resist boasting to his friends what a good bargain he'd got, a virgin for the price of a second-hand wife, and inevitably the story got back to her. Being strong-minded, like most Bugti women, she had carried out her threat and killed herself.

Listening to all these cases was a fascinating experience; often

it seemed that frayed tempers were going to erupt into a full-scale battle between the contestants and their supporters, and I admired the calm and reasonable way in which Ahmad Nawaz managed to preside over so unruly a crowd.

At last it was time to stretch cramped limbs and set off for the evening ride to the Persian well. This time I was brought a chestnut mare and although the saddle was just as uncomfortable, I found myself getting hardened or perhaps merely accustomed to it as we dashed along the nullahs at a fast trot. I washed my hair, had my bath and then on the way back, while Ahmad Nawaz walked his horse slowly between the two Masori Waderas, talking to them earnestly, I trotted ahead escorted by a couple of wild-looking Masoris. One of them pulled a branch from a tamarisk tree and handed it to me.

'Marro, marro!' he urged, indicating that I should use the stick on the mare's flanks as he was doing.

I was dying for a real gallop but it had taken months of patient training to persuade our horses at Sui to forget their single-foot gait and learn to canter and gallop. Now, however much I urged the mare ahead, she only increased the pace of her trot. One of the Masoris drew ahead, the other, a dark-eyed, intense young man, rode close by my side, gazing at me the whole time. We'd left everyone else far behind by the time we rode into the Phlawagh Thana and pulled up by the compound gateway, panting and laughing, all three of us arriving together. I handed the stick and my reins to the young man who'd ridden by my side, and watched him begin to unsaddle the horses, then I went into the courtyard to put away my towel.

About ten minutes later, Ahmad Nawaz arrived, a huge grin on his face. 'Guess what I heard outside the Thana?' he teased. 'Your Masori escort was jealous of your saddle – it was over his arm and he was saying to the other chap – "Ah, that I might even be this zin – this saddle – that she sits upon!" '

A more spontaneous and unusual compliment I've yet to hear.

That night was spent as the previous one, listening to the radio as the yellow moon rose behind the compound walls, talking over the day's jirga proceedings and finally going to sleep under the cold night sky surrounded by scores of recumbent Masoris.

Next morning a high wind lifted the peesh mats shading the archways of the manhir where the charpoys had been placed for

shelter from the blowing sand, and that evening, starting off for the ride to the Persian well, we were trapped in a sandstorm so furious that we were forced to dismount and shelter behind our kneeling horses. When the storm finally passed, the landscape had changed in a bewildering fashion and each of us looked like a khaki ghost.

During the day the jirga had been interrupted by the arrival of a party of wandering Kuchhi nomads from Afghanistan, with several firearms for sale. As the weapons were passed from hand to hand, bargaining began in small groups and here and there a man would hand up a revolver, a Lee-Enfield Repeater (or its faithful replica), or a Mauser for the Sardar to examine. I noticed some of the weapons had Czech markings but since the Pathans of the North-West Frontier – and the Bugtis too, for that matter – are so skilled at reproducing exact replicas of well-known makes of firearms, it was impossible to tell if these were genuine or copies. Quite a number changed hands and at one point we all adjourned to the near-by nullah during a lull in the wind, and took turns in testing out the weapons on a series of stones set up as targets on the opposite bank.

Haji Habibullah was trying out the Mauser which had a terrific kick, and which I passed up for the handier revolver. I had been asking, earlier on, if anybody knew of likely archaeological sites in the districts and now Haji Habibullah told me that there was a hill about seven miles away on the borders of Gurchani territory, that was simply known as 'dhamb' – meaning 'a mound', which usually does prove to be a prehistoric settlement.

'I found one clay figure of a man with folded hands but no legs – they were not broken, it was made like that, without legs, so that you stood it up on the trunk,' he recalled.

I grew very excited and asked to see the figurine. 'Oh, I threw it away – a childish toy,' he admitted, surprised that I should be interested in anything so juvenile. But when I persisted for more details he promised to take me to the site early next morning before the jirga began. 'It is behind the mountain, so we will take the jeep,' he added.

Ahmad Nawaz was discussing the merits of one of the weapons with a middle-aged man with a pleasant, somewhat milder expression than most and he was introduced to me, clasping my hands between both his as he made the conventional greetings.

'This man and his brother served a life-sentence in the Andamans – a former penal settlement in the Bay of Bengal. They'd gone to Multan (a town north-east of Bugti territory, famous for its tombs of Baluchi saints) to sell horses, but they thought they were being cheated, got into an argument, lost their tempers and shot a man.'

Both the brothers were sentenced to sixteen years' imprisonment, since the murder took place outside tribal territory and was tried in the ordinary civil courts, not the tribal jirgas. They were transported to the Andaman Islands, where they served nine years and had the remainder remitted for good conduct. Their families had sent them three hundred rupees, about £22, and with this they bought a pair of buffaloes, gradually built up a fine herd and eventually were supplying the whole of the island with milk.

With hard work the brothers saved twenty thousand rupees, (about £1,500) and with this considerable fortune they were ready to leave for the mainland and home, when the Japanese occupied the islands in 1942 and they were trapped.

'In the end they lost everything they had and after the war they came back here with only twenty rupees between them, and a few words of Japanese,' Ahmad told me, between questioning the man and translating his story to me. But in spite of this unhappy experience he looked cheerful enough and certainly seemed as though the hot temper so characteristic of the Bugtis and especially the Masoris, had cooled down with the passing of years.

The telling of this tale sparked off more reminiscences from the Waderas and Ahmad Nawaz himself.

It seems that illegitimate half-brothers and their offspring cause dissent whenever they have a chance and Nawab Mehrab Khan's second cousin, Jamal Khan, who was believed to have poisoned him and who, in 1939, acted as Regent after the Tumandar's death while Akbar and Ahmad were being educated, began his trouble-making early in life.

'Father sent us both to Aitchison College after the Quetta earthquake, about 1936,' Ahmad Nawaz went on. 'He was afraid our lives were in danger from various family intrigues, so we were the first Bugtis ever to have a formal, western-type education. Father was poisoned in 1939 and the British gave us the protection of a British guardian, an ex-Army officer, and we lived with his family. It was because my brother Akbar and I were thrown together in

each other's company when we were among strangers, that we became so close. In the normal way I suppose I couldn't have helped but grow up jealous of my brother. I remember well when Father brought a new car to Dera. There was plenty of room for both of us to ride with him but you can imagine how I felt when Father refused to let me come with Akbar – he was the eldest and no one else might ride with him!'

Facing this kind of discrimination all his early life could make any youngster bitter, but instead, a surprisingly close affection and understanding developed when the brothers were living away from the tribe.

'By the time we came back here, we'd forgotten Baluchi and couldn't even remember the names of a single Bugti, so that made it easier for people to carry on their intrigues – that happened to my father when grandfather sent him as his personal representative to serve on the MacMahon Boundary Commission which was fixing the Afghan and Baluchistan boundaries with Persia at the beginning of the century. He was away for three years and all that time my father's uncle was turning the tribe against him, so that when he did come back there wasn't one man to step forward and hold his horse – you'd expect the whole tribe to crowd to meet him and carry him home on their shoulders.'

It seems that at this time Jelumb, the father of Mian Khan, the present Jaffrani Wadera, was Mehrab Khan's closest and most loyal friend and he was so incensed at this cold reception that he killed the men who had actually been spreading dissent among the tribe. In turn, he was murdered on the instigation of Mehrab Khan's half-brother and Mehrab was so broken-hearted when Jelumb died that he came personally to spend seven days sitting beside the corpse on a corner of the charpoy!

Very close relatives, children and parents, sit unmoving by the dead relative while mourners bring their condolences, and the Chieftain's gesture was a very unusual and moving tribute.

This was only the beginning of a long feud still very active today. Jelumb's son, Mian Khan, waited until 1938 before he took revenge on his father's murderers, then he killed nine of the Bushkwani Wadera, Haji Habibullah Khan's, fourteen brothers, for they had all helped attack Jelumb or spread dissent among the tribe. This, then, was the real cause of the dispute between the two Waderas, though to look at them as they sat side by side in the jirga you'd never have guessed they were anything but the best of friends. Mian Khan had to flee for safety himself after this wholesale slaughter, and he was in such a hurry that he found himself without shoes as he walked over the mountains barefoot, crossing 5,500 feet high Siah Koh into Gurchani territory as he sought refuge.

A handful of followers accompanied Mian Khan on his flight and, during the weeks that followed, he picked up a Gurchani girl who left her family and spent the next six months wandering the hills with the little band of outlaws, carrying a gun and sharing the rough existence of men on the run.

'She had a baby daughter when she began the journey,' Ahmad told me, 'but Mian's followers complained that the child was slowing them down, so what do you think the girl did?'

I couldn't guess, even though I knew that Bugti women were tough. 'She hung her daughter in a sling suspended from the branch of a tree and she said, "All right, now I am ready without an encumbrance – let us go!" '

'And you mean they just left the child there?'

Ahmad looked at me as much as to say, what a stupid question.

'Of course – maybe somebody found it, you never know. . . .'

Finally the runaways were caught, the girl was sent back to her tribe and Mian sentenced to twenty-one years in jail. When Nawab Akbar Khan was given full ruling powers over the tribe in 1946, Mian Khan had already served seven years of his sentence and he was released when the Chieftain paid an indemnity for him.

Sitting in the courtyard that evening, Haji Habibullah taught me the Baluchi greetings and how to count up to twenty, while I gave him their equivalent in English. Mian Khan, meanwhile, had gone back to his stronghold for the night which was one of dramatic thunderstorms among the hills, though no rain fell on us in Philawagh.

On the last night in Philawagh I asked if I could hear some songs of local significance – in and around Sui the Kalpars and Mondranis were always ready to burst into song about local heroes at the slightest provocation. But the bearded men sitting around me shook their heads and Ahmad explained:

'The Masoris don't go in for singing – they prefer shooting!'

However, now that the question had been raised, they all

demanded that I should sing some western folk-songs and with this splendidly uncritical audience I let myself go with a selection that included 'The Foggy, Foggy Dew', 'Come back, Liza', and a few other calypsos and ballads, received with polite enthusiasm.

Now came the last day of our stay at Philawagh and I felt I was leaving old friends. I hadn't seen a great deal of Wadera Mian Khan, save for the evening ride to the bath, as he went back home each night, but Haji Habibullah Khan always slept near my bed and we talked far into the night.

On one of our side excursions to the archaeological site, I had produced a tin of 'Quickies', little pads impregnated with a perfumed cleansing-lotion which I found invaluable on these hot, dusty trips. Haji Habibullah had been very impressed with these and had eagerly used them to wipe the grime off his own face and hands and after that was always asking me for 'Queekies', so I finally gave him the tin, which he flourished proudly at every opportunity. Alas, it seemed he wasn't to have long to make use of them!

Only a few days after I got back to Sui I heard, with a sense of incredulous shock, that the very night we had left Philawagh, Haji Habibullah was assassinated as he lay sleeping in the courtyard of the Thana where I'd heard so many tales of past feuds.

Apparently the old man had been lying on his charpoy with his back to the main entrance when a group of men burst through the gateway and opened fire on his sleeping body, probably with some of the very fire-arms we'd seen the Kuchhis selling. As the Wadera turned over, he gasped out, 'You cowards, to shoot a man in the back as he sleeps,' and certainly it was unlike the open, hand-to-hand fighting for which the Bugtis are renowned.

Later, some eighteen men were arrested for the crime, all of them members of Mian Khan's family who must have been biding their time with growing impatience all the while Sardar Ahmad Khan and I had been in the district. And Ahmad's joking reference to the Masoris' preference for shooting to singing had been borne out with tragic speed.

But as I made my farewells the atmosphere seemed far from ominous and the two Waderas were vying with each other in their attempts to impress me with their pressing invitations to come back soon, and offers to accompany me to Europe where I was soon to fly on holiday.

But that was a prospect in the realms of wishful thinking and the immediate concern was to render Jamak Pirozani's muzzle-loading gun harmless before we set off in the jeep.

We'd already squeezed ourselves in once, when Ahmad Nawaz decided that Jamak's tupak was too dangerous as he held it pointed at first one, then the other of his eight fellow-passengers; a sudden jerk and it might well have exploded. It took somebody a good half hour before we heard the noise of the tupak being fired – apparently it was even more dangerous to try and unload it, but the shot was too valuable to be wasted, so a target had to be found. I had hoped to visit the historic battlefield of Chambri, some fifteen miles away, but the jeep was in too poor a condition to risk a further trip and so, in the hottest part of the afternoon, we drove away from this remote and lovely valley twisting among the border mountains.

All the way back we were to have trouble with the jeep, the engine stopping constantly so that everyone but Ahmad Nawaz and I got out and pushed.

'Why don't *you* drive?' asked Jamak. 'You don't do anything useful. You don't carry water or work with sheep or goats. You're quite useless!'

And then, as if to soften his harsh, if true, criticism, he once again insisted that I must visit him in Pirozani territory.

We'd driven about ten miles and were slowly grinding up a steep hill close to the Marri border when we encountered a group of heavily bearded Marris and Bugtis, come to greet the Sardar.

Twenty miles farther on we met a group of Masoris who had ridden from Philawagh early that morning and since then had been cooking sajji, expecting the Sardar to arrive for a meal early in the afternoon; but Ahmad was anxious to get on the road, worried about the state of the engine, and still sitting in the jeep he accepted a hunk of sajji as a matter of courtesy and then asked the horsemen to ride ahead to Burzain to help us out if the jeep gave trouble.

The twisty, steep track up the mountainside was lined with waiting Masoris as we drove up and got out of the jeep to let Ahmad negotiate the bends. It took him three attempts but with strategically placed stones and stalwart Masoris to push, he finally reached the top of the pass and now we said our real and final farewells.

Down in the gorge the shadows were lengthening among the weird 'finger-painting' patterns on the hills; a rabbit sat up to watch us and Ahmad Nawaz took a pot-shot at a fox that suddenly ran along the top of a high ridge and stood there silhouetted for an instant as it turned to look back at us. Seconds later it had gone, replaced by a row of apparently menacing silhouettes that looked as though they had laid an ambush in these grim hills, and I wondered who Ahmad's enemies might be. It seemed unlikely that he alone of the Bugtis had nobody on his tail, seeking revenge for some ancient, inherited grudge.

But the 'ambushers' began running down the hillside openly and panting up to the jeep, asked if we were in trouble, and could they help. They were Nothanis and I asked if they could foretell the future from the shoulder-blades of a sheep. One man, who wore an unusual little conical white wool cap, offered to kill one of the snowy, fat-tailed dumba sheep next morning and read the bones if we would camp with them that night.

But the road ahead was too tricky for delay and after further greetings we drove on over the second pass to look down on the peaceful Lope Valley bathed in the honey-gold rays of the setting sun. It was a quarter to seven as we drove up to the mud-brick Thana at Serani to find charpoys prepared for us outside, and crowds of Nothanis waiting for another jirga.

The men sat down in a wide semi-circle facing the charpoys. Behind them, their horses were tethered to large stones, all of them saddled-up and I was told it was the Nothanis' practice to keep their horses ready for instant action whenever they were in camp.

The Hal was exchanged and written petitions were now brought out and presented as Ahmad Nawaz settled back to deal with yet more problem cases. In the far distance I could see a horseman galloping full-pelt down the steep hills on the farther side of the river. So far the Nothanis hadn't noticed him as they were all facing the Sardar, but as soon as the newcomer reached shouting distance, he yelled in a high-pitched shriek and if he'd dropped a bomb in our midst he couldn't have had a more gratifying reaction. The men sprang to their feet, caught up their guns and swords, even hatchets, and ran to their horses. One man dashed up to the charpoy I was sitting on and snatched his rifle and ammunition belt from underneath the wooden frame while

almost everyone began to rebind his turban more closely about the mirror cap. Meanwhile, the newcomer had left his horse at the foot of the hill and was running towards us. It was twilight and the sun had almost set. In the long shadows I could see that he was only a boy, probably not more than fifteen, and he panted to a halt before Ahmad Nawaz, flinging out one arm dramatically as he began reciting what was obviously a challenge.

It looked as though I was really about to witness an authentic tribal battle and hurriedly I rushed to the jeep to get my cameras which I'd packed away, thinking it too dark to take any more photos since my electronic flash had long ago run down. Still, I had to try, even though my film was far too slow, and I got a couple of shots of the Nothanis racing for their horses while the youth, having finished his challenge, ran back to the foot of the hill where he'd left his mount.

Old Sobdar Nothani, who'd been sitting close to Ahmad Nawaz, was helped to his feet by his sons; one of them ran to fetch their weapons, hidden in the roof of the old man's hut, while the others brought his horse and helped him on to its back. Sobdar himself took off his turban, twisted the folds more tightly and began binding it again to afford the greatest protection to his head.

The atmosphere here matched the lightning playing among the hills and I shrank in the background, hoping nobody would remember I was there.

But Ahmad Nawaz and Mohammed Mondrani remembered – Mohammed who had also kept in the background in alien territory, sprang to my side, obviously distressed that he had no weapon with which to defend me. Ahmad was busy calling back the eager Nothanis as they streamed down the hill, and it was an extraordinary sight to see these fiercely-bearded warriors waving swords and guns and calling out excitedly, halted in their mad rush by their Sardar's voice.

Reluctantly and oh, so slowly, they came back; ancient white-beards like Sobdar, glossy black ringlets escaping from other turbans, even smooth-cheeked boys, all arguing, pleading, some even almost weeping as they tried to persuade Ahmad to let them accept the challenge.

It wasn't until we'd left that I heard the story. Across the valley, on the other side of the river-bed, the territory was occupied by some two thousand Saidianis, a subsection of the Shambani

Bugtis. In 1954 Nawab Akbar Bugti had been asked by the Commissioner to round up eighty-four of the Saidianis who had been declared outlaws by the Government after many raids into Sind and Punjab. The Chieftain had accordingly collected men from each section of the Bugti tribe to help arrest the outlaws, and had managed to do so without bloodshed which was a considerable achievement especially since his orders had been to get the men, dead or alive.

As a mark of appreciation, the Commissioner had recommended that three thousand rupees should be distributed among the men who had helped in the arrest, but just at that time the Commissioners and Political Agents of the district were changed. The new Political Agent, inexperienced in dealings with the tribes, refused to give the money to the Chieftain for him to distribute, saying that he himself would see that the men got their share through the Government agent, the Tehsildar. But the Tehsildar didn't know which men qualified for the award either, and the men themselves, looking on this as an insult to their Chieftain's integrity, refused to come forward and claim their due.

As a result, the PA not only withheld the award but also the usual Government allowance of six thousand rupees a month which was paid to the tribe as a whole. Since then, the six thousand rupees had come out of the Chieftain's pocket until the matter could be solved, but the present trouble was not over the actual award. The Saidianis had never forgiven Akbar Khan for what they felt was a betrayal in arresting the wanted men. Part of the Chieftain's hereditary lands lay in the Saidiani Shambani area and, until the time of the arrests, had always been tilled by the Saidiani tenants. After 1954 they were told that, in future, Nothanis would work the land.

In 1956 and again in 1957, the Saidianis had threatened to stop the Nothanis from ploughing, but hadn't actually carried out their threats, possibly because the rest of the tribe warned them that if they lifted a finger against the Chieftain they would combine to attack and wipe the Saidianis out completely.

'They have always been regarded as the bad eggs; they're not true Bugtis but were outlaws who came to join the tribe hundreds of years ago, when we first settled in these hills,' Ahmad explained.

This year the Nothanis had been ploughing the land as usual, but two days previously the Saidianis had seized the bullocks and the ploughmen and this was what the Saidiani youth had announced. He had followed this up with the news that the Saidianis were waiting for the Nothanis and challenged them to attack them on their own territory.

The Nothanis were only too glad of an excuse to have a go at their traditional enemies, but Ahmad Nawaz was anxious to make a peaceful settlement and to persuade his brother to try and make the first move of conciliation by allowing the Saidianis to work the land, some of which had been disputed for forty years.

The peaceful, tranquil evening had been transformed into an angry purple with Nothanis gathered in a bitterly resentful group around the slender figure of the Sardar, still begging him to let them fight this latest insult to their Chieftain. Small groups kept breaking away to reach for their horses, but those who started riding down the slope again were called back and there were men milling around in every direction. Finally, a Nothani messenger was sent galloping off to the Saidianis to tell them they would not fight that night.

'I am responsible to your husband for your safety,' Ahmad added in a grim undertone to me. 'I can't risk a battle while you're here. However, I don't know whether the Nothanis will take any notice of my orders when the sun rises tomorrow. Let's hope the night may cool them off!'

Somehow I doubted it, looking at old Sobdar waving his sword in the air and raring to lead his men into battle as he'd done so often in the past. 'He can hardly walk more than a few steps, but put him on a horse and he will ride all day until the horse drops from exhaustion,' I'd been told, and it was obvious now that the mere thought of a scrap had sent the adrenalin coursing through his old veins.

As Sandeman discovered a century ago, the Bugtis and Marris are a people to themselves and to handle them required a very different understanding and technique from normal Government dealings.

The jirga was obviously abandoned, and with my escort of eight men I got back in the jeep, disappointed, I must confess, because I would like to have seen the episode through to its end. It was quite dark now and, as we drove away, the sounds of fierce

arguments still rung in our ears, and ghostly white figures moved around with their horses, passionately waving guns and swords in frustration towards the Saidiani territory.

'These fellows are just crazy for a fight,' observed Ahmad, but perhaps opportunely and a little late came the sound of the mulla calling the Azaan that summoned the men to evening prayers.

We could barely make out the flickering lights of fires in the Saidiani settlement among the trees, then as we bumped along the track it seemed that the noose-shaped valley suddenly filled with a mass of twinkling camp-fires. There were, of course, several hundred tribesmen gathered to meet the Sardar and most of the fires had been built by these men, camped by the side of the track, their dark, bearded faces lit momentarily by the flickering flames as we drove past.

During the rest of the journey I learnt more of the internal politics of the tribe, with my companions all adding their views. 'When I was eight years old I tied the turban on my brother's head with my own hands and acknowledged him as our Tumandar,' Ahmad recalled soberly. 'I was the first to do so and I swore to be loyal to him always, I couldn't desert him, whatever happened.' But it was a loyalty that was to be tested to the utmost in the years to come.

10 *Archaeological Exploration*

'Neither of thee nor me a heap of dust remains . . .'
(Khuda Bux, Dom (Marri) . . . Popular Poetry of the Baloches)

MY INTEREST in archaeology really began in 1945 when I stayed with the Political Agent of Chagai (on the borders of Baluchistan and Afghanistan) whose bungalow had been built on top of a prehistoric mound at Nushki.

Encouraged by Sir Mortimer Wheeler, then Director-General of Archaeology in undivided India, to whom I showed some of the sherds I had picked up on this mound, I went back to London to cram a brief, intensive course of field archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, followed up later by a more thorough course.

Back in Baluchistan, after Partition in 1947, I bounced about in jeeps and trucks, pursuing rumours of 'dhambs', some rising to eighty or a hundred feet with accumulated layers of mud-brick walls and houses, often destroyed by fire. New settlements were built on top of the old until, deserted, eroded by centuries of weathering, covered by blown sand, they were transformed into mounds that stood out from the flat desert like giant carbuncles.

The settlements were usually placed at strategic intersections on the age-old caravan routes, many still in use today, others deserted when water supplies dried up, rivers changed course, or wells ran dry.

Between Kalat, capital of Baluchistan's largest princely state, and Quetta, military cantonment, lies the valley of Mungochar where I noted details of eight dhambs within sight of each other, their slopes all covered with pieces of prehistoric potsherds and clay figurines dating back some five thousand years or more to a pre-Indus Valley civilization. It was in this same valley, at a

mound known as Togau, that I found an entirely new type of ware that came to be known by the name of the dhamb; a hard, wheel-turned red ware decorated with black geometric designs and highly stylized animals, goats, ibex, and so on. I had tracked down other sites in the highlands of Jhalawan and Sarawan, in the Gidar Valley south of Kalat, all along the route to Surab and Khuzdar and down as far as Las Bela. South again, in the hot, sandy Mekran as far as the Iranian border, and north too, all along the Chagai district to Koh-i-Malik-Siah, the Mountain of the Black King in the tangle of mountains where Iran meets Afghanistan and Pakistan. And since I was still a very new student of archaeology, I passed on my findings to more experienced field-workers including Beatrice di Cardi, who followed up some of these discoveries in later years.

Now in Bugti territory, a complete blank on the archaeological map, I felt all the old excitement of the hunt again. Added to this I had by now some years of experience as a student of Sir Mortimer Wheeler's, working with him in England and Pakistan, and with the French Archaeological Delegation in Afghanistan.

For months I searched diligently on horseback and foot, looking in vain for traces of early man in this area midway between the fantastic prehistoric cities of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa. I showed photographs of cave paintings and several prehistoric sherds and figurines to Mohammed Mondrani and his friends, asking them to tell me if they had ever seen similar paintings and sherds, but for a long time the answers were negative. Even when I found Mohammed's own children wearing what were obviously prehistoric beads and pieces of inscribed bone as amulets, I was merely told they had been picked up far, far away, or were gifts, precious, magic charms not on any account to be parted with. It was all very frustrating. But one day, after I'd been nearly a year in Sui, Mohammed confessed that there *were* places where writing that nobody could decipher, was to be found on cavern walls – in Kalpar territory, not Mondrani, so I would have to ask the Kalpar Wadera for permission to visit them.

Hayat Khan, the youngest son of Adem Khan, one of the Kalpar Waderas, was a pleasant, rather retiring young man who spoke English and worked as a timekeeper in the Sui office. Always smartly dressed in white duck trousers and shirt, his hair cut short and his beard trimmed like the Tumandar's and Ahmad Nawaz's, he was eager to help; but told me that the road to the caverns, made when the Company had drilled its second well on the Zin Range several years ago, had since been washed out and might now be impassable. However, we decided to try to get to Gaddu Gah, as the caverns were called, Gaddu being the name of some long-forgotten Chieftain or King, and Gah meaning a cave. Early one March morning, long before it was light, Mohammed Mondrani, Hayat Khan, a driver and I set off in the land-rover towards the Lower Siwaliks.

A dead camel lay across the track at the foot of the hills, a reminder that the days were getting unusually hot for the time of year, but a few miles farther on we came to a broad nullah on whose banks I spotted a number of promising-looking mounds.

There was also a brick-built fort, just a hollow square built on the same lines as that of Sui Fort some twelve miles from the gas field camp and which housed British troops, then Bugti levies over a century ago. Today it formed the headquarters of the Kalpars and here, in Gandoi Fort, lived Hayat Khan's father in one of the half-dozen brushwood huts scattered in the shade of the walls.

It was the Kalpar clan who had helped Bibrak the First to 'wear the Turban' and assume ruling powers over the tribe (probably in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century). Bibrak's elder brother Karam Khan, who had been Tumandar, was killed in battle at Harrand. The next brother, Akif, was living in Dera Bugti then known as Dera Bibrak, but he found life far too expensive as he had to entertain every Bugti who visited tribal headquarters. But Bibrak had asked the Kalpars for aid and had been given sheep and money. Akif thereupon renounced his claim to the Chieftainship and told Bibrak he'd better take over.

There are said to be some 1,500 of Akif's descendants living outside Dera Bugti today, for once the line has passed from an elder brother to a younger one, his descendants forfeit all claim to the Chieftainship.

We paused in Gandoi fort only to pay our respects to the Wadera and then drove along a wild and twisting nullah until we found ourselves winding up a practically non-existent track in the limestone hills. And then, right on a hairpin bend, we were brought to a halt by a wide gap where a complete section of the road had just disappeared.

There was no way round, no possible way of bridging the gap, and we could only back cautiously down the track until at last we could turn round and drive back to Gandoi.

It was a disappointing end to my first attempt to reach Gaddu Gah and the thirty-five miles we had driven had taken us more than three hours; it set the pattern for many more fruitless excursions before I was able to find any trace of prehistoric man, but it had set a precedent too, and from now on the Bugtis were slightly more informative.

Unfortunately, any prehistoric site yielding signs of human habitation was looked upon as a potential treasure-trove and therefore to be kept secret. Again and again I had to reassure the Bugtis that I wouldn't reveal the exact whereabouts of any such sites they might show me, lest strangers come to steal the 'treasure' from them. And the fact that the only treasure we ever found was clay figurines or potsherds never seemed to shake their faith in the existence of fabulous wealth buried by ancient potentates.

Alexander the Great is still remembered in this area as Iskandar Zirkar-Nain, Two-horned Alexander, a name that provokes interesting speculation on the horned representation of a God fated to be sacrificed for his people, with Mithraic and Moon goddess rites intermingled.

Down the sandy nullah to Uch, site of the third of the wells to be drilled in Bugti territory, I came across a camel-track still known as Alexander's Path. It was on this path that some stones had been found on which inscriptions and carvings had been worked.

'One was an axe-shaped stone about twelve or fifteen inches long by eight or ten deep and there was writing and reddish, chocolate-brown stains where the engravings had been coloured,' Ahmad Nawaz had told me. 'Another stone had a picture of flowers and men on it, and I gave these to one of the Masters at Aitchison College, Lahore. He was Major Alexander Andrew Philip Milne and he said he would take them to Lahore Museum.'

After hearing this, I had gone to look at the path in the hope of finding something similar but drew a complete blank. Later on I made inquiries at the Museum in Lahore but nobody there knew anything about them, so Major Milne, if by chance these words come to your notice, please do write and tell me what happened to the stones and if they really were prehistoric.

I myself was shown a stone when visiting Begum Bugti. It had been given to Sir Shahbaz Khan, the Tumandar's grandfather, and had been cherished by the family as being covered with some long-forgotten unidentified script which, if only it could be transcribed, would reveal the whereabouts of a great treasure.

'A holy man came here from Sind and said he could read that script and that it told of treasure buried near to Iskandar's Path by Uch, near to a mosque, close by Panchgur,' they told me.

Of course, I was all eagerness to see this stone, sure that at last I was on the verge of success. But, alas, the remarkably intricate pattern of lines covering the highly polished golden triangular stone were undoubtedly due to natural causes. I photographed it just in case I was wrong and then returned it to the family.

So far the nearest I had come to finding anything of a prehistoric nature in this whole area had been at Luni Dhamb, near Sibi, the former headquarters of the famous Mir Chakur, founder of the Bugti-Marri tribes. The Baluchis say of Sibi and its neighbouring town, Dadar, 'Oh God, when thou didst make Sibi and Dadar, what need was there to create Hell?' and 'Travellers leaving Sibi and Dadar for Hell should take warm wraps', for these two towns at the foot of the Bolan Pass do experience intense heat in the summer months – no more so than in the wild interior of the Bugti country, but they are certainly not very inviting. However, when I visited the dhamb in January 1956 with the then Political Agent of Sibi and two other guests who were staying with him, it was raining steadily, the first good rains for ten years.

Disregarding the weather, we wandered over the mound collecting sherds, pieces of bone bangles and fragments of copper; somebody even found a small gold bead, while an interested villager had proffered a silver coin bearing a Greek effigy on one side and a Hindu one on the reverse, which he claimed to have found on the dhamb. He said that the village children often found figurines which they played with then threw away, and he went on to tell us the legend of Luni.

It appears that a Chieftain living in a palace on the mound, claimed the *droit de seigneur* over every bride on her wedding night.

'Some people say that the Chieftain's sister got married and he claimed the same right over her. The people were very angry but the Chieftain refused to give the bride up so Allah destroyed him

and all the city too by pouring stones down and burying them.'

The Pakistan Petroleum Company's Dove had flown me first to Sui, then to Quetta and from there I had driven down to Sibi with the Commissioner. Then the Dove was to pick me up and fly me back to Karachi in time for a VIP party at the General Manager's house that evening, but, alas, the rain put paid to that. As we struggled to heave the car out of the mud, we heard the Dove circling among the low clouds overhead and much later, when a couple of bullocks had succeeded in towing us out of the morass and we reached the airstrip laden with potsherds, the ancient chowkidar who kept watch there informed us that the plane had been and gone.

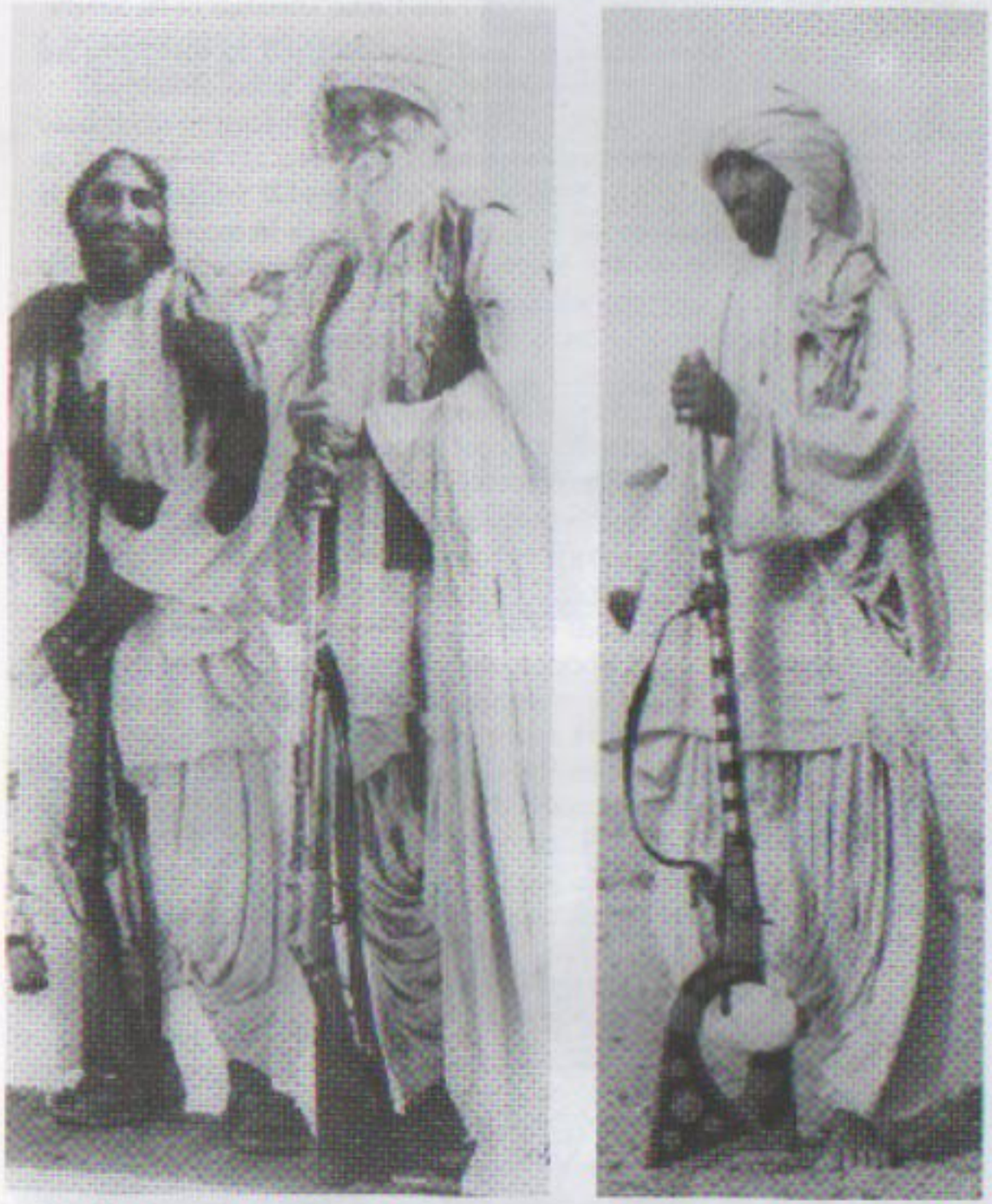
'But it will return in one hour,' he added, so hopefully I sat in the car and waited, one, two, three hours until it was dark and I realized the old man had obviously misunderstood the pilot's message.

Now, however, I was living in the Bugti area and I felt positive there must be similar dhambs somewhere here, although there was obviously nothing within a radius of some ten miles round the arid gas field itself.

I'd had many unsuccessful excursions following up rumours of ancient sites, but one day Mohammed Mondrani suggested a picnic at Truk on the way to Dera Bugti, where, he said, there was a cave they called Khumbani, after the khumbs or rain-water holes in the limestone slopes of the hills.

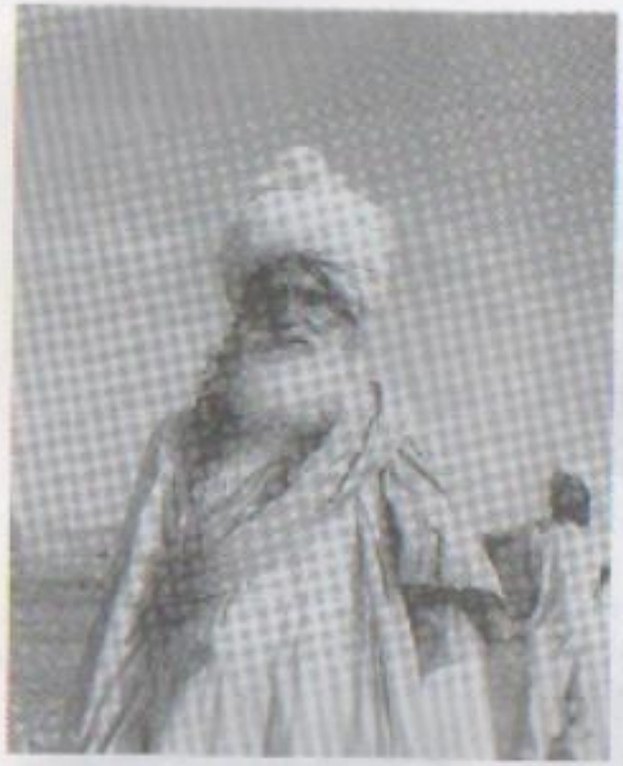
We clambered up the rocks, past the water-holes to a narrow gorge where the two cliffs met overhead and provided a cool shelter over a smooth, wide ledge of rock that was polished with centuries of wear. Here the picnic was spread out and other members of the party, replete, reclined in the shade for a siesta. Mohammed and I left them while we went in search of Khumbani, but if he hadn't shown me the way I might have searched for months without finding it. Higher and higher we scrambled, edging along narrow ledges clinging to the side of the cliff, ducking to crawl through low tunnels, wriggling under falls of rock that looked impassable and finally emerging into a kind of deep, dry well surrounded by high limestone walls in one of which a shallow cave had been formed with an overhang probably worn away by centuries of wind and rain.

The rocky floor was covered with sand and I poked about in vain



Sobdar Notham Bugti (white beard) with Jamak Pirozani Wadera at Serani Levy Post

(On right) Bugti's traditional weapons include swords and tupaks—muzzle loading guns richly decorated with beaten brass, like this one held by a Kalpar Bugti



Fakir Lakha, attendant of Pir Suhri's shrine, his hair dyed with henna, at Serani Levy Post in Nothani Bugti country

Murder is punishable by a short term of imprisonment and a fine—these shackled prisoners, some holding their leg-irons to save chafing their ankles, are Marris in Kahan jail

for potsherds or flints or something to indicate early occupation.

'Shepherds come here and they have found old pots but they used them or took them away,' Mohammed told me, then pointed to the roof of the overhang. 'See up there, writing – what does it say, Memsahib? Where is the treasure?'

I felt a surge of excited triumph as I craned my neck to study the roof some twenty-five feet above the floor. It had been treated with a white lime-wash that formed the ground for a series of what appeared to be finger-paintings in red ochre, geometrical designs, some like Chinese characters, others like swastikas together with a few pin-men who appeared to be hunting. About a year later, I returned, bringing with me Jean-Marie and Ginette Casal, leaders of the French Archaeological Delegation with whom I had worked in Afghanistan. Even in that short time more of the roof had fallen, but for them, too, this was unlike anything they could identify; as with my other finds, I had already sent detailed photographs and notes to the Pakistan Government Department of Archaeology, but nobody has ever hazarded a guess as to the origin of the paintings.

'We Bugtis believe that there was a Hindu King called Gupjooni who hid here with his armies when the Turks invaded our country and that the paintings tell where he buried his treasure,' explained Mohammed, obviously terribly disappointed that I wasn't at once able to give him detailed directions for finding this buried wealth. (By "Turks" he meant the fifteenth century A.D. Arghuns.)

However, the swastika on the roof did give a certain amount of credence to the possibility of a Hindu having been responsible since this symbol, borrowed and reversed by Hitler's NSDAP, has enjoyed a holy and fortunate significance for thousands of years. But they seemed such a mixture of childishly primitive hunting or fertility characters and more sophisticated signs that it seemed almost certain they must represent many different periods. They seemed to have something in common with others I had seen sketched by Charles Masson, the American explorer who wandered through Afghanistan and Baluchistan in the early part of the nineteenth century. Masson's characters had been painted in black and red on a white ground, and he had found them on a large rock between the Pabb Hills and the Hab River on the road to Las Bela north of Karachi.

After Khumbani, I intensified my inquiries and determined to make another effort to reach Gaddu Gah. I was to have further frustrating attempt before I finally achieved my goal at the beginning of August 1959. A series of landslides had blocked the alternative route we had tried to take with a jeep, and now, with Hayat Khan and Mohammed in attendance once more, we drove as far as possible in the jeep and then took to the horses Hayat had arranged to meet us where the track was blocked a few miles from Gandoi fort.

We started before dawn, to make the most of the cooler hours, and drove without stopping for two and a half hours before we reached the gorge full of khumbs and fallen rocks. For the next couple of hours our sturdy Bugti ponies scrambled over the rocks, galloped along sandy nullahs and picked their way along stony barren hill tracks over two ranges of weirdly-weathered limestone and sandstone hills. By ten o'clock the bare limestone rocks were reflecting back the sun's heat as though we were in some vast, satanic oven – travellers on their way to Hell from this spot would certainly have needed warm wraps by contrast, and it seemed to me the ponies must surely burn their unshod hooves as they trotted over the fiery rocks.

But at last we were across and making our way down to a nullah where a delightful stream bubbled from the ground, watering a clump of ancient tamarisks and oleanders. While we eagerly dismounted to water the horses and dip our faces and hands in the cool stream, a Kalpar, wearing plaited sawaz sandals and a tupak over his shoulder, stopped to exchange the Hal and then jumped lightly across the stream on the stepping-stones spanning the water.

On the last mile and a half, climbing a steep, dazzling white limestone slope that formed the southern face of the Zin Range, we passed a group of fossilized tree trunks and a series of large stones placed carefully one on top of the other.

'Some Bugtis thought there must be gold here and they built a furnace to try and smelt it from the rocks,' Hayat Khan explained as he saw me looking back curiously.

A few minutes later he stopped, got off his horse and held mine for me to dismount. There was nothing but smooth bare rock to be seen and I wondered what the idea was.

'We're here,' Hayat Khan told me with a grin, and sure enough,

the two Kalpars who had accompanied us on the horses were already tethering theirs to large stones and one of the men was disappearing into the rocky mountain-side even as I watched.

Then as I left my horse and walked towards the men, the ground seemed to open up at my feet and a narrow fissure slipped away into the bowels of the earth, a deep wound gashed into the limestone and invisible from two or three yards away.

The crack plunged a hundred feet or more to an open area where lush greenery sprouted from tumbled rocks and fringed a linked series of pools curved like a chain in and out of the limestone walls. Holding on to bushes and outcrops of rock, I slipped and scrambled down the fissure after Hayat Khan, while Mohammed Mondrani came behind me, carrying my cameras. Right at the foot of the crack I looked up to the sky again. It was almost like being in a well, with the stars visible in the now dark blue sky above.

Squatting on a rock by one of the pools, a tribesman was dipping his long ringlets into the turquoise water, washing his hair. He was wearing a lunguttu, the Bugti version of a wrap-around sarong, and he followed this shampoo with a bath in the deep pool, splashing around joyously. The khumbs twisted among the fissures so that each seemed to be hidden from the others, forming a series of delightfully secluded private swimming pools. I chose one curved back among the cliffs, while the men joined the Bugti who was already swimming with a dog-paddle stroke. The water was sweet and pure but my pool was half covered with a gigantic spider's web, or rather, series of webs, forming a curtain across the surface of the pool. Gingerly I lay down in the free area, leaving my jeans and shirt on the rocks, and soaked up the delicious refreshing coolth eagerly. By the time I'd climbed back on the rocks my undies were dry, steaming in the heat, but now I felt full of energy again and set off to explore as many of the caves as I could cram into the time we had left.

One vast cavern led into another and yet another and Hayat Khan had not exaggerated when he had stated that several hundred people could live here, absolutely hidden from view, with plenty of fresh drinking water available all the year round. And the paintings were just everywhere, on roofs soaring high above, on walls, the rocky floor below polished as if by the bodies of thousands of spectators lying down to view the murals; some

were concealed in tiny tunnels hardly big enough for a boy to lie prone, and it seemed that the very size of these tunnels had protected some of the most exquisite flower and animal paintings.

Others adorned vast, cathedral-like caverns, where bats clustered in their hundreds in the darker, loftier reaches. I made out pin-men hunters waving spears or shooting arrows into animals that ranged from spotted, cow-like creatures to horned deer and ibex and something that might have been an elephant. Whorls and geometrical designs, Egyptian key patterns, squares divided into more squares with a fifth square tacked on to one corner and fish-scale patterns typical of the Harappan period some four thousand years ago. But there was not a single tiny potsherd or figurine to be found on the cave floors.

'There *have* been some here, but people threw them away'— it was the old story and no doubt had I the time to camp there and explore thoroughly I might have found sherds in odd corners or among the undergrowth on the banks of the stream, but it seemed likely that the caves must have had a very long, varied history of occupation and that the King Guddu of local legend, after whom they were named, was a comparatively recent occupant.

We had not expected our journey to take so long, nor had I allowed for more than an hour's stop at the caves. At Sui they were expecting us to return by one o'clock, for nobody thought we'd want to be out longer in this intensely hot weather. We had to start back unless we wanted search-parties out looking for us. This was always the fear when I was off on an exploratory trip and could leave no exact directions, for it was so easy to get lost. Company officials in a scout-car equipped with two-way radio had recently been lost for three days! Even though I was always accompanied by Bugti guides, my husband was never able to relax until he saw me safely back in Sui.

By now the heat was really fierce as we scrambled up the narrow gully to the top of the cliff and the outside world. I'd filled my flask with cool water from the pools, and started off with a scarf dipped in water, tied round my neck. In seconds it was steaming, then bone-dry but I repeated that operation till I'd used almost all my water. This was one of the few occasions when I ever wore a hat in the desert – but my black Cordoba hat with its wide brim kept the direct sun off my head now as we retraced our steps across the limestone range, over the stream, where we were

hailed by another Kalpar who asked what treasure we had found at Gaddu Gah, then up into the hills once more.

Even the ponies were flagging and I felt dazed and faint, hanging on to my saddle in a kind of trance during this interminable ride between oven-hot rocks. Yet mingled with the discomfort was a wonderful sense of triumph and perhaps, because of the very difficulty of reaching Gaddu Gah, it has always held a special place in my affections.

I went back there during the winter, on an unusually dull day when the sky was overcast and grey. The rock-fall had been cleared and the friends I took there were able to drive all the way by jeep. It still was not an easy trip, but by comparison it was like getting on a Tube train and for that very reason lost some of its magic for me, as far as the journey was concerned.

But it was in Philawagh that I found my first dhamb in Bugti territory. The ill-fated Bushkwani Wadera, Haji Habibullah Khan acted as guide to a prehistoric mound about five miles north-east of the Philawagh Levy Thana, across the Baragh Range to the banks of the River Ghand close to the Gurchani territory.

Besides Ahmad Nawaz and myself, we managed to cram twelve people into the jeep, all tribal elders, split up between the three subdivisions of the clan so as to avoid jealousy. For this reason, too, Mohammed Mondrani of Mut had to be left behind, looking very forlorn as we drove away.

With counter-directions from Mian Khan, Jaffrani Wadera, we twisted and turned along the route, frequently stopping, because by now the pistons were failing. Once, an enormous spider ran out from the windscreen by Ahmad Nawaz and I, terrified of such monsters, yelled in panic as I shrank away, trying to get out of the crowded jeep. Search as we might, the wretched creature had just disappeared, so I spent the rest of the journey as though sitting on needles.

'It's only a jherramb,' the men laughed, but spiders of any kind send me into hysterics. I nearly trod on a banded krait once in Kalat State as I walked down the side of a prehistoric mound from which I'd just picked up an agate bead. Banded kraits are deadly, but I felt no revulsion at the sight of it, unlike the glimpse of even a harmless spider.

The banks of the fast-running River Ghand were fertile, with thick groves of peesh, the dwarf palm, and an old, gnarled

pharpagh tree, a wonderful view across the valley to the mountains and a really, genuine dhamb rising some ninety feet high and covered with large black stones and thousands of potsherds.

Excitedly I began climbing the side of the mound, picking up sherds as I went. Mystified at my enthusiasm over a lot of useless pieces of broken pots, my elderly companions began to humour me by picking up more pieces themselves, bringing them to me for approval. One of them obligingly held out his shirt tails and we put our finds in this as he followed us around.

While I was searching the surface of the mound, Ahmad Nawaz paced out rough measurements, estimating that the narrow mound was about 150 feet long by 50 feet broad, with many traces of cooking fires, chicken and other animal bones among the ashes, squared off stone walls and vast quantities of Harappa-type sherds. Succumbing to temptation for the first time since I began looking for dhambs in Baluchistan, I directed the digging of three small trial trenches, for we'd come armed with spades from the Levy Thana. As the men dug, old Jamak Pirozani with his foxy face sat on the edge of the holes, not bothering to restrain his impatience.

'Dig, dig faster,' he urged. 'Dig deeper, deeper,' while I tried to restrain the workers, so that we might examine the levels we were finding in these crude trenches, picking out and separating the sherds from each layer as we went.

Jamak glowered at me as though I was deliberately frustrating him.

'Why do you want that broken pottery?' he grumbled. 'Dig for the gold, the gold!'

Finally he insisted on the men digging at a place of his own choice with, of course, the same negative result as far as he was concerned.

'He's convinced you're only pretending that you want the pottery; he's quite sure you've found some directions to dig for buried treasure here,' laughed Ahmad Nawaz.

It was funny in a way but annoying, too, for I feared that the enthusiastic gold-digger would ruin the dhamb for any serious archaeological work in future. Not that there was much hope of anyone coming here to work. With so many hundreds of other more accessible sites all over Pakistan waiting to be excavated, hard-to-get-at places inside restricted areas such as the Bugti–

Marri country were unlikely to get a look in. But this was another reason why I was so anxious to get as much information from these sites as possible.

'We won't allow Jamak to dig here when you've gone,' I was assured. 'This is Masori country – Jamak is a Pirozani Nothani and cannot come here without Masori permission and Haji Habibullah Khan has promised to see that nobody digs on the dhamb.'

Haji Sahib would have made a perfect worker on the dhamb. He was patient, gentle, intelligent and cautious in his probing, scraping away with a wide-bladed knife after only a few moments of demonstration, and picking up the immediate essentials of stratigraphical digging very quickly. But poor Haji, so soon to be assassinated, was unable to guard the dhamb, and in any case the area is now closed to all outsiders.

It was very hot again, well into the 120 degrees but not so hot as at Gaddu Gah. Here we had a fairly open valley and no bare rocks to reflect the sun. Still, it was exhausting work scrambling up and down the steep slopes of the dhamb searching for signs of walls and a young shepherd brought me a welcome goat-skin of water from the river to quench my thirst and rinse my burning skin.

Standing on the summit of the dhamb I looked down the spur that ran westwards towards the river. This spur was covered with exceptionally large, heavy black stones, one with animals' heads carved in it, while in the earliest strata at the base of the mound I found the remnants of what appeared to be a stepped defensive system of large squared-off stone walls similar to those we found on the prehistoric site of Mundigak in Afghanistan. Much of the pottery, including the buff ware pierced with holes like colanders, was reminiscent of the Kot Diji ware from a recently-excavated site in Sind, which the Pakistan Director of Archaeology, Dr F. A. Khan, with whom I'd once shared a trench during a field-training dig in Cornwall, had described as being older than Mohenjo-daro, probably about 3,000 BC.

Now I could see the criss-cross of camel-tracks leading across the surrounding mountains towards Fort Munro in the north; eastwards to Harrand and the Indus Valley; westwards, dividing in two with one trail leading towards Sibi and the other south to Dera Bugti.

Obviously Ghand must have been an important place in its day, and that day could have been five thousand years ago.

All over the surface of the dhamb I picked up Harappan-type sherds with peepul leaf and feathered plant motifs; dish-on-stands, rather like cake-stands, with red outer rims divided by a narrow blank line from the buff centre, were very plentiful. Some had a further pattern of five rings of incisions made with a finger-nail or a twig. There were the Kot Diji fish-scale designs and others with wavy lines interspersed with leaves and 'suns', all black on red, and many with a fine polished slip.

Pieces of pottery bangles, a red bead, coarser pottery, mainly pinkish or buff, greenish-grey and grey were all scattered on the surface, as well as a piece of what seemed to be very eroded copper, slightly curved and about two and a half inches long, that might have been the pin from a brooch.

A few pieces of buff sherd retained the clear imprint of woven material placed on the pots while the clay was still damp, and many more designs included one fish-head and a bird-head with some incomplete small beaker-type vessels of fine grey ware.

Alas, we had to leave the dhamb and return to Philawagh for the jirga trials. Reluctantly walking down the northern slope of the mound, I discovered, half-way down and extending from here to the foot of the slope, five very large, very heavy hand-worked black stones, some rounded, others rectangular, and each one pierced with a smoothly-worked, perfectly round hole. In four cases the hole was drilled right through the stone, but in the fifth it stopped about two inches from the base. Each of the stones measured about two feet high by two foot six inches in diameter, while the holes were almost exactly centred, measuring nine and a half inches at the top and narrowing to five and a half at their base.

I'd never seen anything quite as large but they did remind me of the very much smaller door-stones I'd seen at the shrine of Shah Maqsud in Southern Afghanistan, where solid, carved wooden doors were attached to posts revolving in hollowed-out stones.

I photographed them with a passing shepherd boy leaning on their smooth, gigantic sides, and, as he lounged there, he told me that the fields at the foot of the eastern side of the dhamb

produced ten times as much harvest as the others. They were probably fertilized by soil mixed with bones washed down from the dhamb and this is one of the reasons why many of these prehistoric sites simply disappear, removed by the cartload – or camel-load – by enthusiastic local farmers.

'There's another dhamb about four miles to the east, behind those mountains,' Haji Sahib pointed. 'But that spur divides Bugti land from the Gurchanis, and we are not on good terms with them now.'

So I couldn't survey that site, but I learnt from Haji Habibullah that he had looked at the site himself and found complete pots there, as well as what appeared to be an ancient well.

Laden with potsherds wrapped in various turban-ends, I left Ghand dhamb reluctantly. Dusty and tired, we drove to the banks of the swift-flowing Kaha River a mile or two away, at a spot where several pools had been formed below some high cliffs. Before leaving Philawagh, Ahmad Nawaz had promised me a swim and I had brought a swimsuit without really believing I'd actually use it. Now I rushed to change behind a bush, watched unblinkingly by a tiny shepherd boy, while hilarious shouts and sounds of splashing echoed from the cliffs.

Haji Habibullah and two or three other venturesome elders were cavorting in the water like schoolboys, their ringlets tied on top of their heads, their pushtis worn like sarongs round their waists. Ahmad Nawaz had wound his pushti rather cleverly round his thighs to make a natty pair of trunks and while he swam energetically round the pools, the Masoris, their skirt-like garments filling with air and floating to the surface, jumped up and down with shrieks of laughter that contrasted with their grey locks and usually dignified behaviour.

'Why doesn't Jamak Pirozani come in?' I asked.

'Oh, he's been and gone – he did a rapid strip-tease while you were changing, and plunged into the stream naked, then he rushed back just as you came out,' grinned Ahmad.

After a few minutes we hustled back into our clothes and piled in to the jeep, bouncing back to Philawagh in the hot, noonday sun.

More than a year was to pass before I found another dhamb and that was in September 1959. I was attending a jirga with the

Tumandars of the Bugti and Marri tribes, at Serani Levy Thana in the Nothani country. After my usual inquiries I was told that some of the Nothanis had dreamt of buried treasure on a mound about a mile south of the levy post, and had dug there hopefully, finding a square well of uncemented stones but so far no treasure.

This dhamb proved to be about 150 feet high, rising above the banks of the Kaddour stream. It was actually one of a series, but once more I was pressed for time and could only give them a superficial examination; however I found the remnants of squared-off stone walls and normal-sized hollowed out door-stones, a great deal of petrified wood, some of it being very large trunks, and many, many sherds. A few inches below the surface, a burnt layer stretched, mixed with much grey ash and bones, and I returned with beads and pottery, mainly the black on red northern ware, but there was also some of the southern buff ware and a little fine grey. As the two Chieftains helped pick up the surface finds, the Marri Tumandar, Khair Bux, revealed that he knew of many such dhambs in his area, besides some large rocks with cuniform writing on them. 'One is lying facedown on the ground but I saw it before it fell – if you promise not to let anyone know exactly where they are, I'll take you to see them,' he offered.

Again this obsession with secrecy, which must partially account for the fact that, up till now, nobody has recorded anything about archaeological sites in the Bugti-Marri areas.

Even so, my own discoveries came at long intervals and I never did get to see the Marri dhambs. The next Bugti one I saw was in April 1961 when I accompanied the Chieftain's wife and sister on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Mir Durbar Fateh Khan, Pirozani, in the Zin Range.

I had noticed on a previous visit to the family that the Mratta servants used what were undoubtedly prehistoric pots of great beauty as everyday utensils, churning sour milk, making lassi, and so on, in decorated vessels that looked to me to be pure Amri ware, probably five thousand years old.

I was told that they had been found about half a mile from the shrine on the Zin Range, at a spot known as Bagh-i-khumb and that many figurines had been found in holes embedded in the four arms of a stone cross lying in the ground.

This sounded most intriguing and I wondered if the cross

might have been in fact some kind of foundation stone. With the Begum and her sister-in-law, both enveloped in ankle-length black bourkas, packed into Akbar Khan's scarlet jeep, together with the Begum's younger children, a couple of women-servants and an elderly driver, the harem set off while I followed with Hayat Khan Kalpar, Jamak, the Pirozani Wadera in whose territory the shrine lay, and of course, Mohammed Mondrani of Mut.

Our journey from Dera Bugti took us through waves of curiously black and brown volcanic stone hills studded with golden sand-dunes, the path marked by little piles of stones to guide us, set there by trackers the day before. Not so much as a camel track was visible in this strange, wild place where one stretch of country resembled a frozen sea of molten lava with not a living thing in sight.

On the flat plateau where the shrine of white stones stood out like a marble mausoleum, we left the vehicles and began walking over the stony ground, searching every little hole dug by treasure-seeking Bugtis. There was nothing that looked even remotely like a stone cross in the ground, though there were a number of ordinary Muslim graves clustered close to the shrine. No mound that I could see until we came to the edge of the plateau where it fell quite steeply to a dried-up river bed where a few tamarisks had thrust roots deep down to the moisture below.

Hundreds of flints, cores and arrow-heads mingled with the stones on the surface of the plateau here, with fragments of worn red sherds. The Begum's uncle, Mama Sahib, had joined us now and he described how he had found an enormous skull near here. It was so big it frightened him and his companions and they had broken it into small pieces. It sounded like the remains of some prehistoric monster but, of course, it was the old story – all the pieces had long since been lost and nobody remembered exactly where the skull had been found.

Mama Sahib was a farmer and he had himself been making a pilgrimage on camel-back, together with his sister, the Begum's mother. They were all intensely excited, thinking that I was about to reveal the longed-for treasure; spades were produced, brought by the Begum, and, at her command, the Rahejas all relatives, accompanying her uncle and mother, began digging. While I tried

to curb their enthusiasm discreetly, the women threw back the concealing face-pieces of their bourkas and took turns with the spades, going carefully as I searched the ground. But this was far too slow for Mama Sahib who snatched the spade from his niece, declaring that the women were lazy, and began to dig like mad. He must have been into his eighties but the more he was asked to ease off, the deeper he dug until I despaired of restraining the old man.

But only eight inches or so beneath the surface we began to find the beautiful Amri-Nal type of buff pottery I'd seen in the Begum's courtyard, I nearly wept when the old man's eagerness to see what was inside the pots resulted in one of them – perfect when found – being broken, but I could see just how this must happen over and over again – magnificent, four or five thousand year-old pots deliberately smashed in case they contained gold coins or jewels.

All I could do was to exact a promise from the Begum that she would let me know of any further sites, and save any finds for me to see, if possible keeping the sites intact.

Not long afterwards I went to Europe on holiday, but at the end of the year, in December 1961, I came back, after having talked excitedly of these finds to the late General Hayaud-din, then directing Pakistan's Oil and Mineral Resources, a man of great charm and diverse talents and interests which included archaeology.

Between official duties he managed to squeeze a few days of relaxation with us in Sui, bringing with him his good-looking son Ahmed. We bought a couple of sheep and arranged for sajji picnics prepared by the Bugtis, of course, in the ruins of Sui Fort, and the dim recesses of the bandits' lair at Waj Kila, and then we took the road to Dera Bugti.

Here I left the General and his son looking round the bazaar while I paid my respects to the Chieftain's wife. I was greeted in the purdah compound by the Begum, the other purdah ladies and the children, with the women-servants clustering round me, all of us by now old friends. Excitedly they produced a collection of small decorated bowls found at Bagh-i-Khumb in my absence but, alas, energetic cleaning had rubbed off a lot of the decoration.

General Hayaud-din was as thrilled as I was when he saw these ancient bowls and he took the decorated ones back with him to

Karachi, while I later presented the remainder to the Archaeological Department there. But Bagh-i-Khumb was too much off the beaten track for us to manage a visit during the General's short stay, and I asked the Begum if she'd had any news of other prehistoric sites.

'Why, of course – there is the one near to here,' she recalled. 'It is Dawroo Tul . . .'

'We are sure now that it is a dhamb', the Chieftain's sister broke in, her thick, dark plaits swinging vigorously as she bubbled with enthusiasm. 'Of course, we couldn't dig there ourselves – it's right by the road to Dera Bugti and too public – but many things have been found there. The name means Dawroo's Hill or Castle,' she added.

It seemed extraordinary that I hadn't noticed it myself, but unless you got out of the jeep and walked to the top of a steep slope flanking the road you wouldn't realize that the mound was not natural.

"They say that Dawroo built this place and there was a battle here,' Mohammed Mondrani told us, after questioning passing Rahejas. We'd been forestalled in explorations here for the usual treasure-hunters had been at work, digging a hole some twelve feet deep which revealed strata with ashes and many sherds. It saved us a lot of labour as I could just sit and study the strata and pick up small finds without effort.

And practically as soon as I stepped in the hole I found part of a female figurine in red terra-cotta, the bare breasts adorned with a necklace, a plaited hair-style fashioned round the head. It was the first, indeed, the only figurine I ever found in Bugti-Marri country, though undoubtedly there must be hundreds waiting to be picked up by somebody with time and adequate resources.

Between us we collected buff and red pottery of various designs and our Raheja companions, their tongues apparently loosened by the fact that we had the Begum's blessing on our search, now told me that there was a similar dhamb further along the road to Sui.

Now at last I felt I could begin a proper dig, for here were sites within easy reach of the Dera Bugti guest-house where I could stay during the dig. Given even a few weeks I was sure that I could at least conduct a proper survey of all possible sites in the valley.

And this was really the most tantalizing of all my discoveries, for it came in what proved to be my last month living in Bugti territory after a five-year stay.

Now, at the time of writing, the whole area is closed to outsiders and there is no saying when, if ever, it will be open again.

11 *Music and Musicians*

'Take up my song, O singing minstrel,
Play its air upon the strings of your dhambiro . . .'
(Panju Bangulani Lashari, Gurchani. Popular Poetry of the Baloches)

The Baluchis have always been noted musicians and poets, drawing their inspiration from nature to describe everything from epic battles to tender love-affairs. There are songs for every occasion, to celebrate a good harvest, a battle victory, a wedding, birth and death, and generally the songs are sung by professionals called Doms or Loris, paid minstrels who were – and often still are – attached to the retinue of a Chieftain or wealthy headman. These Doms use the dhambiro and the sarinda and train young boys as professional dancers and singers. They use a rhyming slang inverting Persian, Brahui and Baluch words to form a language few outsiders can understand. Marriage between a pure-blooded Baluchi and a Dom is strictly forbidden.

The dhambiro is a slender-necked three-stringed instrument plucked with the fingers; the sarinda, also known as the shagh from the wood it's made of, has five gut strings over a bridge, and five sympathetic strings under these, and is a type of fiddle, played with a bow, the instrument held upright with the base resting on the ground as the player squats, or pressed against his chest if he is standing.

The other popular instrument among the Baluch tribes is the nar or nal pipe, but this may only be played by pure-blooded Baluchis and is used to accompany the hill-songs known as dastanagh, sung all in one breath, particularly by the Nothani Bugtis, using an archaic form of Baluchi.

There are also the professional davtars who recite long genealogies of the tribes, taking the place of written records.

During my stay in Bugti country, and my travels throughout Baluchistan, I recorded many different types of song, particularly the fast-disappearing dastanaghs. These are hardly tuneful; they begin with a sustained, deep note from the nal, like the drone of a bagpipe, and this is played as a kind of duet with a voice note from the nal player himself; suddenly the player switches to a fast repetition of three or four high-pitched notes on the flute, while the dastanagh singer, with eyes closed, recites rather than sings the words in a monotonous groan on one or two notes.

Visiting a Jekrani village on the borders of Sind and Bugti country, I recorded several very old songs including 'Punella' and 'Bermi' played by an old man on an algozhar, a pan-like double flute, and accompanied by an ektara, a one-stringed lute, and a rhythm beaten out on an upturned earthenware pot and a metal plate. It was in another border village that I met one of the most remarkable living Baluch poets, Jawan Sal Bugti, a tall, dignified old shepherd well into his eighties, whose fame had spread far outside the boundaries of tribal territory. With his white ringlets and snowy beard, his fierce-eyed, dark-ringleted sons by his side, he was probably of the same generation as Sobdar Nothani, but unlike Sobdar, this old man was gentle and unwarlike. Completely uneducated, he was, unusually for a Bugti, extremely religious and had spent his entire life as a shepherd, finding his inspiration as he wandered the desert with his goats and sheep. His long compositions were entirely religious and his 'diwan' or collection included over one hundred and fifty of his own compositions, some of them with more than three hundred and fifty verses, a fact I wasn't aware of when I began recording in the khudal of mud and brush, crowded with curious and admiring spectators.

As I played back the recording there were appreciative cries of 'Wah, wah – shabash' from the audience and obvious disappointment when I had to curtail the recital because my batteries were running down.

But I suppose by far the majority of my recordings were made at weddings or the numerous sajji picnics which were always accompanied by singing and dancing. Some of the favourites included traditional epics like 'Sami'. Sami was the girl-friend of Mir Chakur, founder of the Bugti–Marri tribes, and her story was sung to me on various occasions but notably by Ghulamo Masori Bugti while I was at Philawagh.

The song is in the form of question and answer, like many Bugti songs, and tells of the time when Mir Chakur was fighting the Marris at Chambri. This was a typical instance of confusion where the singer mixed several episodes from different periods, weaving in well-known heroes and heroines to make the story more interesting. For of course, Chambri was a battle fought in the nineteenth century by Ghulam Murtaza Bugti against the Marris, while Mir Chakur lived in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

However, Ghulamo's version told how Sami had fled to the hills with her girl companions and was without food or water. Mir Chakur sings.

'I was with all men in the jungle at that time of the great Chambri *jang* (battle) and I did not meet with my friend (Sami) . . . instead I was finishing the battle . . .'

'Jungle' to any Baluch means a flat place where the tough camel-thorn scrub or peesh grows; as opposed to the utterly barren stony hills.

The nineteenth-century wandering poet-lover, Toakali Must, was also brought into this song, for Mir Chakur encounters him during his search for Sami, who calls her companions about her, telling them that 'heavy rain is coming, water is rushing down the nullah and we will have water to drink – I have found honey in the jungle for food.'

Mir Chakur asks Toakali Must if he has seen Sami and the poet answers, 'Yes, when I went hunting I met Sami in the jungle and he told me, "If you ever see Mir Chakur, give him my greetings." ' Then Mir Chakur asks, 'Was there water and food for her there in the jungle?'

Toakali replies, 'Yes, water and honey there are in the jungle . . .' The honey possibly being the gaz shekal from the tamarisks.

The difficulties of tribal life in the desert are reflected in these songs, obsessed always with the problem of food and water, of faithful – and faithless – lovers, and of endless feuds.

Their descriptions are enchantingly original – 'You look as lovely as a Quetta apple . . . !' '. . . my lover is like a parrot flying to come to me . . .', 'our Chief was River Indus in generosity,' and in this respect they remind me of the poems of Spain's Federico García Lorca.

But not all the songs I recorded were ancient traditional epics.

I was delighted to find that today's poets are inspired by such momentous events as the discovery of the Sui gas-field which, when the first flares were lit, resulted in the mystics of the tribes forecasting the end of the world and of terrible misfortunes to come. Men streamed into Sui from far-distant places, drawn by the fantastic sight of the glow in the night sky over what had always been an uninhabited desert.

Sitting in the great hollow square of deserted Sui Fort – one of the disputed areas claimed by both Kalpars and Mondranis – I recorded a number of songs commemorating the arrival of the 'Cumpanee'. One of these, composed by Bingo Nothani and sung by Nawab Khan Nothani (the 'Nawab' in this case being a proper name and not a title), tells of the early days of exploration for oil and gas particularly in the Zin Range:

'From Sind comes the news that the Cumpanee is now going to the Mountains,
From Kashmor she first came to Dholi and then crossed over.
She brought airplanes there and immediately set up water machines.
She discovered Drinak Nullah and then the Sui Nullah.
From Sui's old thana (fort) Cumpance went beyond Syed Nullah
And she built a steel town where motor-cars roar day and night.
For two years Cumpanee dug wells but found not petrol (*sic*).
Now the green-coloured machines have been uprooted
And the Cumpanee is all set for Zin.
The Road is built.
It leaves the Camp and winds towards Rai.
Nineteen tents have been set up near Thunni desert.
Then Cumpance leaves Thunni and crosses Muth nullah.
She leaves Kaura Maidan and harnesses the bullocks for road-making.
Subhan Allah! Cumpance has turned jungle into level ground.
Even men of the Kalpar clan now wear clean clothes and go to work the machines.
But no matter how hard we work, Afzal Supervisor from Sui always grumbles at us;
Afzal has been put very high, he can't now come down.
We make the roads for the Cumpanee and also the air landing grounds.
We are all Cumpanee employees, and Lal Must's eyes are now always red.'

Lal Must was a driver noted for his quick temper, and it's a curious fact that when Bugtis lose their tempers their eyeballs do seem to be bloodshot. 'Must' means mad, so Lal Must was probably so nicknamed, like Toakali Must, because of his uncontrollable temper.

I found this poem particularly interesting for the exact details of camping places and descriptions of individuals which provide a good example of the way in which the smallest incident can be recalled generations later.

I recorded a similar song about the 'Cumpanee' composed by another Nothani Bugti, Hazhab, sung by Tawakkul Lothani, Nothani and accompanied on the nal by Nihaloo, a Masori.

'Come, let us visit the place where the Cumpanee works;
Cumpanee's work is not difficult and we earn a lot of money there;
Tonight we will visit the Hawk's domain
Where the Cumpance is building steel forts over the ground.
Cumpance's apron spreads wide, from Sui to Uch and beyond;
She has even captured water,
It has been trapped, it is brought here in steel pipes from large rivers,
And the Cumpance is distributing wealth.
She is collecting still more workmen;
They are coming from all over to join the work.
People are coming from Sind and the Punjab.
Policemen also come here, and so do wild men from the hills.
Masoris too have rushed here from Thankuri.
Machines roar in the desert like rain clouds.
Early in the morning the whistle goes for work.
Engines start off, we all rush to work.
Some break their fast at home, others take food with them.
We go to work with the same eagerness as the goat goes to eat green grass.
We have different jobs.
Some carry baskets; others wield the hammer;
Some load the donkeys; others drive them.
Some load them heavily, others put only a little weight on their backs.
Cumpanee gives each one money; all are satisfied.
We drove donkeys before, now we drive motor-cars;
We ride in them too. Cumpanee is searching for treasured oil,
And we are guiding them.'

Songs, dances, wrestling and a few tribal games make up the average Bugti's entertainment. Of course, when the 'Cumpanee' brought the delights of civilization to Sui, the cinema – or 'bioscope' as it was called, was among the novelties introduced to the Bugtis. When I first arrived, the weekly cinema shows were given out of doors on the tennis-courts and since the Bugtis couldn't understand the dialogue, the film looked just as good to them when viewed from the back of the screen as the front. However, Mohammed Mondrani approached me, very concerned indeed, after one American science-fiction film which had depicted gigantic ants overrunning California.

'We do not have such things in our country, here it is better – there in America it must be very bad to live.'

And nothing I could say would convince him that it was only make-believe.

But few Bugti children – or adults for that matter – have yet encountered such a sophisticated form of amusement. Their childhood, like that of most nomadic peoples, is one of hard work, looking after the animals, helping to fetch water and fuel almost from the time they are able to walk. When they do relax it is to play games like chonk, played with four cowrie shells which are called khusk and more or less serve the function of dice. The backs of the shells are cut off so that the khusk fall flat on the ground when thrown. I had a demonstration in Philawagh and it could well have remained unchanged since prehistoric times – such sliced cowrie shells are quite common on prehistoric sites. All the shells are taken in one hand and thrown on to a flat surface with one movement. Points are won or lost according to how the shells fall, on their backs or faces, and Bugtis, who love gambling, bet quite heavily on the results.

There's a version of hunt-the-thimble or slipper, played by boys and girls, with maid-servants joining in. A clean bone is thrown in the air as far as possible and everyone rushes to find it. The finder holds it up for all to see, then runs away with the bone and is chased and attacked quite roughly unless the finder happens to be a girl.

Kabadi involves two teams who line up some distance apart. A boy from one team takes a deep breath, calls out repeatedly, 'Kabadi, Kabadi, Kabadi!' without stopping as he runs to touch a boy in the opposing team, then back to his original place, all

without taking a fresh breath or ceasing to call out 'Kabadi'. Meanwhile, the boy who has been touched must try to grab and tackle 'Kabadi' and if he manages to stop him reaching his own team, he takes the turn of 'Kabadi'. The winning team is the first in which all the players reach 'home' safely.

But perhaps most typical of all Baluch pastimes is that of whiling away a long journey by posing riddles and puzzles to fellow-travellers.

Ahmad Nawaz Bugti gave me a number of examples of these during our various excursions. He was particularly good at the rhyming riddle and once offered a prize of a hundred rupees to anyone who could solve a riddle of his own composition. He told me it in Baluchi, then translated literally:

'Paigham kuzar sher droshma'
(*Message was done by the beautiful one*)

'Manar warta siahai(n) siamara'
(*That was eaten by the black cobra*)

'Boasht kaima drah bia(n) epriac sala'
(*Wait that I will become, this year*)

'Matara dia(n) wazi sohnrai hala'
(*I to you give my beautiful news*).

I took it down phonetically and even with Ahmad's translation couldn't really understand the English and had to confess my failure.

'Well, my mother-in-law won the money when she guessed that it was talking of the eclipse of the moon,' he explained.

Like trying to solve *The Times'* or *Observer's* crossword puzzles, you really need a great deal of practice before you can begin to comprehend the mind of the compiler.

Another of Ahmad's riddles went like this:

'Atka kashis badshah phayzagahi(n) phaza'
(*Came a harbinger (saying) 'King is coming behind'*)

'Kais khanna(n) Hama(n) Kaiswara Shaitain Mazana'
(*Suspect doing those who are riding the devil's horse*)

This was the morning star preceding the arrival of the sun that sends lovers running quickly from their secret night-time meetings.

Riding in the jeep to Ghand Dhamb I had asked some of the tribal elders to tell me their riddles. All the Masoris had a fund of riddles but nobody would translate them to me.

'They're purely stag-party riddles, I'm afraid,' Ahmad apologized.

Haji Habibullah Khan blushed deeply and waved his arms in distress after one of his riddles had been greeted with deep-bellied laughter, for Ahmad Nawaz was telling me it was highly unsuitable for my ears, while Haji Sahib thought it was actually being translated. But there were a few I was allowed to understand:

'Diwant acharant'
(Two, then four)

'Dukora dohasharant'
(Two blind, two clever, sharp)

The answer to this was the reflection of a pair of eyes in a mirror.

'Nors bunda(n) bai jura(n)'
(It rains without clouds)

'Phorkut talai autogah(n)'
(Fills water-holes and even reservoirs)

The answer is fat dripping into a pan from a sheep's tail – the fat tail of the dumba sheep – when being cooked with sajji.

'Panchar marro mar bi'
(To the five, lot of beating and hitting)

'Panchar giro dar bi'
(To the five, take hold will be)

'Churri delai gerbi'
(It turns of the heart and becomes beloved).

The answer to this riddle was playing the dhambiro; five fingers strumming the strings, beating and hitting them, five others holding the instrument and the music they produce turning the heart towards the beloved.

I'm ashamed to say I didn't guess one of these.

Mir Chakur, the fifteenth-century Rind Chieftain, boasted one of the most famous of all Baluch poets and singers at his Sibi Court – Jam Durrak Dombki – whose ballads are still sung today,

while Mir Chakur himself was a notable composer. Also at Court was a beautiful Persian Baluch woman poet called Gohar whose songs and compositions had brought her much wealth in the shape of great herds of camels.

Mir Chakur and the chief of the Lasharis, Mir Gwaharam Lashari, were both in love with Gohar and after demonstrating their skill in spear-throwing and sword-fighting, decided to let a horse-race decide which of them should win the lady. Each Chieftain was to choose a rider to represent him. A Rind loosened the Lashiri rider Rawan's saddle-girths and he lost the race to the Rind Chieftain; but in revenge the Lashari chief stole Gohar's camels, which seems strangely ungallant. There are, in fact, many different versions of this ballad, but all end in a thirty years' bitter conflict between the Rinds and the Lasharis which was finally won by the Lasharis.

Something of Sibi's past grandeur still comes to life once a year during the ten-day cattle fair held every February. During British rule this took the form of a spectacular Durbar presided over by the Agent to the Governor-General who was the Viceroy's direct representative. Awards were presented to tribal Chieftains all of whom wore their traditional finery, and renewed their allegiance to the Crown. This was later followed by the cattle-fair, racing by bullocks, camels, horses and men, wrestling and all kind of tribal sports.

I had often been invited to the Sibi Durbar, but by the time I was actually able to accept, the glory had departed and it no longer even warranted the name of Durbar, a Regal Court.

For all that, the Fair still attracts tribesmen in their thousands from all parts of Baluchistan and the bare ground around the dusty little town becomes once more black with the 'Baloch' and their cattle.

The last time I attended the Mela, as it is now called (a Fair) – that Grand Old Man of Baluchistan, Sir Henry Holland the world-famous eye surgeon who died at the age of ninety in 1965, witnessed the presentation of the Tamgha-e-Pakistan award to his son, Dr Ronnie Holland. Dr Ronnie had successfully taken over his father's medical work with the clinics and hospitals founded more than sixty years previously, while father and son had just been awarded the Magasay Foundation Award for their years of selfless medical missionary work in Pakistan, saving the sight of

some 150,900 tribesmen as well as performing every other conceivable type of surgical operation. Father and son donated their award of some £3,600 to the Quetta Hospital founded by Sir Henry in 1900.

I watched Marri tribesmen cooking sajji on the grand scale for the official guests but there was a distinct air of nostalgia about. The Marri Chieftain was there, wearing his tribal robes, in the big tent where the awards were made by a Pakistani Government official in an ordinary lounge suit. And sitting next to Khair Bux Marri, was Sardar Ahmad Nawaz Bugti, also rarely costumed in tribal dress. But ten minutes after the official reception was over, both young men had changed into lounge suits before joining in the buffet meal served by scarlet-coated chuprassis, sole reminders of past sartorial splendour.

Nibbling at choice ribs of sajji, we chatted about the return journey I'd made a few months earlier to Serani when the Bugti and Marri Chieftains had met the Nothani and Shambani tribal elders in an attempt to settle the age-old feud between the two sections. The quarrel did not involve the Marris but Khair Bux had accompanied Akbar Khan Bugti as a neutral arbitrator.

I had set off from Sui at half past four in the morning with Mohammed Mondrani of Mut and Mir Ghulam Haidar, Akbar Bugti's kinsman, in a vehicle that had definitely seen better days.

At the foot of the steep and narrow Bar Boozh Dreep we all got out and walked, or rather, scrambled using hands and feet to haul ourselves up the cliff, forgetting my heavy tape-recorder resting in the back of the jeep, and the machine fell out with fatal results to its works, as I was to discover later.

A great crowd of tribesmen had gathered at Serani to greet the Chieftains who had arrived the night before. The Shambanis had built themselves a manhir on the opposite bank of the river, while the Nothani Bugtis were encamped all around the mud-brick Levy Thana. The tiny school house itself had been taken over by the Bugti Chieftain who was sitting with Khair Bux Marri in the shade of the verandah. Both men were wearing the cobwebby fine lawn tunic and baggy trousers that were their normal hot-weather compromise between the voluminous Baluch robes and their customary western suits.

Newcomers kept arriving, pushing their way through the crowds to touch the feet of the two chieftains and then clasp their hands.

There were a number of old friends, Masoris from Philawagh whose presence made me miss the murdered Haji Habibullah all the more, while Marris who had come to see their Tumandar, a comparatively rare visitor to the area, boasted the most luxurious and glossiest black beards I'd ever seen, with quite the largest turbans topping off their flowing white robes.

Sobdar Nothani was seated close to the Bugti Tumandar in a place of honour, and although the old warrior looked slightly more bowed than when I had last seen him, he had obviously lost none of his vigour. Five of his sons flanked him, among them his youngest, a ten-year-old – and he confided that he'd taken a new, young wife in the past year and had been presented with a baby daughter!

'And how is it that the British have gone away but left their women behind?' he queried, finding it difficult to believe that I had a husband back in Sui who was actually willing to let me loose alone in the land of the Bugtis!

I couldn't really answer this to his satisfaction, and I left the Bugti Chieftain to explain on my behalf, while I went off to photograph the string of camels struggling up the steep river banks with loads of kahir wood for the sajji fires, and the men sifting the dust from rice through pieces of turban cloth.

It was September and the sky was heavy and overcast; under the manhir where the two chieftains listened to the excited arguments of the tribal elders, the atmosphere was stifling and only relieved when the sajji was cooked and brought in procession together with the rice and the kak bread and various curries, all of which had been cooked by the Nothanis in the shade of the Thana building.

Also in the shade of the building was the tiny class of boys whom the jirga had ousted from the manhir itself. The boys sat on the ground, reciting verses from the Holy Koran, supervised normally by the mulla but now, since their lesson included the writing of the verses, by the young Mratta schoolmaster, cousin of Aziz, the clerk in the Sui office.

One of the boys from the class followed me shyly back to the manhir where he produced a white rabbit which he held out to the Bugti Chieftain for his approval.

It was the only time I'd encountered a child with a pet of any kind; cats were virtually unknown here while dogs were strictly

working animals, trained and bred as fierce guard dogs, so the pet rabbit provided something of a novelty, and I wondered how it had escaped the cooking-pot.

Meanwhile, savoury smells from the open-air kitchens began to make me feel ravenous and when the food arrived I tucked in with a good appetite, eating from the communal dishes spread on a ricketty table. Three very grubby tumblers had been conjured up and one was now given to me, filled with a brilliant orange liquid.

I supposed this must be orangeade brought up in the Chieftains' baggage but it seemed to be singularly tasteless. I wondered if it was a Bugti speciality, like the lassi and the gaz shekal and the 'coffee' berries, and Akbar Bugti nearly choked on his sajji.

'It's a speciality all right,' he laughed – 'we call it navaf – in other words, "nau ao" or "new water" – rain-water in fact!"

I noticed that Khair Bux Marri's glass was filled with deliciously clear water – 'But this is "old water", taken from the river at the foot of the hill,' he explained.

'Well, you won't feel offended if I doctor this with a little of my "medicine", I hope?' And I brought out my flask of alcohol which I carried around on these excursions for just such emergencies. 'It'll kill off all the bugs,' the doctor had assured me cheerfully, and certainly it came in useful on the many occasions when it would have been undiplomatic to have asked my hosts to boil the water or change it, and I never did suffer from any internal upsets despite eating and drinking anything I was offered.

Over the meal I heard something about the argument that had been occupying the elders all morning.

'It's a continuation of the one you heard with Ahmad Nawaz last year. You know, after he got you away from here, old Sobdar had insisted on his sons lifting him into the saddle and had led a raid into the Shambani territory, waving his sword and shouting and swearing because, as you know, Ahmad had forbidden them to shed blood. So he let off steam by lopping off the heads of all the corn ripening in the Shambani fields. Since most of it was mine, I was actually the one who suffered,' Akbar added with a grin.

The dispute over the land had been going on for some forty years. 'Well, don't drag me into it – I'd rather not act as arbitrator,' Nawab Marri grumbled when asked his opinion – I could see he

was worried about the prospects of another feud boiling up and later on he whispered, 'You know, it's just no good – nobody will give way an inch. This case'll take weeks even to hear!'

He himself stayed only for one week and called to see me back in Sui on his return from the jirga, explaining that the tribes had begun to lose their tempers and were showing hostility towards the end of the week, but they were no nearer a solution than when they began and it looked as if the problem of the Shambani land would continue for another forty years.

Two elderly Nothanis with straggling, untidy beards appeared at the entrance to the manhir, wet through from a sudden, brief shower that had just stopped, leaving a sparkling clear landscape softly reflected in the pools of rain-water, and an invigorating fresh smell in the usually harsh, dry air. The men were carrying the shoulder-blades of the sheep that had just been cooked for our meal, and holding them up to the sky, they peered closely at the cracks and blemishes on the broad bones and prophesied another large gathering – but not a jirga – in the near future.

It didn't sound a very inspired prophesy; perhaps they had seen something more in the bones but were reluctant to reveal it, but there was no hint at the dramatic disasters that were about to overtake the Bugti Chieftain.

One ancient tribal elder whom I'd seen at Philawagh – the man who had protested about his daughter's husband being impotent – was still complaining about his son-in-law and insisted that his daughter should have a divorce or else, as he put it, 'she will take a lover and then she will have to hang herself.'

We managed to get him off this vexed question by asking about his early life, and he recalled travelling to Afghanistan with his father about the beginning of the century, following a political dispute.

'We only stayed for a few weeks,' he explained, 'but there were other Nothanis who stayed for twenty years and then came back here with Pathan wives from Afghanistan.'

And I'd been under the impression that these Bugtis never strayed from their hills! I was beginning to see there were hidden undercurrents that a stranger could only guess at.

Great deference was paid to another tribal elder, this one an elderly man with a thin, wrinkled face, a white beard and ringlets stained orangey-red with henna. He wore a white turban but his

pushti was green, the holy colour, and he played incessantly with a rosary of black beads twisted round his wrist. Fakir Lakha was in charge of Pir Suhri's shrine and as soon as I heard this I asked if I could visit and photograph the tomb of the wandering Holy Man.

'I don't think you'll be allowed to go there since women are usually forbidden to visit it,' Nawab Akbar explained. 'Anyhow, I can't give permission – it must be for the Fakir to say. If you like, I'll ask him later on – it will mean a long climb barefoot up the mountain, you know . . .' he added.

That lessened the attraction slightly, but still the shrine was so much part of Bugti life that I felt I had to try to get there, and when the Fakir himself asked me to take his photo I agreed eagerly, hoping I was storing up a certain amount of goodwill.

The jirga continued until sunset when the second meal of the day, exactly the same as the first, was served to us. It was an exquisite evening, the sky clear, the rain-clouds disappeared and the red glow of the setting sun reflected in the waterpools pitting the cliff-top. The four charpoys that had been brought from Dera Bugti on camel-back, were set out in the open, forming a circle in front of the manhir, each with a mosquito net erected on uneven poles at the four corners.

The elders formed a circle on the ground around the charpoys, tying their pushtis in the figure-of-eight to support back and knees, and a fragile-looking old man sat himself on a peesh mat inside the circle and began strumming on a dhambiro.

'He's our most famous dhambiro player,' Akbar Bugti whispered as one of the Nothanis joined the old man and launched into a deep-throated dastanagh.

It was now that I discovered the damage to my tape-recorder and had to content myself with recording the scene with my camera – and certainly I didn't realize I was taking my last photographs of the Bugti Chieftain.

He sat on the edge of his charpoy, one leg of it propped up with an insecure-looking pile of stones. Surrounding him were the tribal elders; the throbbing of the dhambiro and the high-pitched voice of the singer provided just the right background noise for such a setting, while the angry flush of the setting sun reflected in the rainwater pools, the purple hills surrounding the valley, and the tinkle of bells from the hobbled camels, all added to the

singularly haunting beauty of a scene that my memory caught and held so vividly.

The Chieftain told me of his plans to rebuild tribal headquarters on a higher site in the Chhattar Valley.

'The river's changed its course several times and when it rains the whole area's flooded. Of course, that doesn't happen often, but when it does the mud-brick walls are weakened and I'm afraid the whole place will collapse one day.'

He went on to explain that he would rebuild on the same traditional lines, using mud-brick, with high strong walls around the city. 'But I'd put in a good drainage system, sanitation and electricity,' he added.

I heard about the dam built near Philawagh, close to the Ghand Dhamb I had explored. It had been a joint effort, shared by the entire tribe, as all such projects must be – twenty-four thousand rupees contributed by all sections, plus their labour.

'But as we had no expert advice, it collapsed with the first heavy rains – we'd forgotten – or rather, didn't think – to leave large enough holes for the water to pour through,' Akbar grinned ruefully.

At that time the Government had agreed to pay compensation, but due to changes in administration, the whole thing appeared to have been overlooked, giving the Bugtis one more grievance to brood over.

Now the old greybeards began reciting anecdotes of the past, and recalling epic battles and, most of all, their ancient quarrels with the British.

It all began in 1839 when a Major Billamore captured Dera Bugti after many skirmishes with the raiding Bugtis who had been constantly harassing the British on their march, under Lord Keane, to Afghanistan. Remember that at that time, Afghan territory extended as far south as Sibi, which was a detached district of Kandahar. The Bugti Chieftain, Bibrak the Third, a very old man, was captured and exiled to Sind for two years, during which time Major Billamore occupied Dera.

As soon as Bibrak was allowed to return, plundering began again, and so, in 1845, exasperated by the repeated acts of lawlessness, Sir Charles Napier sent General Simpson with over seven thousand troops, plus a large body of Baluch auxiliaries, Dombkis, Jekranis, and so on, to join in a several-pronged attack. The

Marris, who were at that time also at war with the Bugtis, closed their line of retreat to the north, so that finally the Bugtis were caught in the famous stronghold of Trakri Marav.

The British troops, commanded by General Simpson, occupied Dera Bugti once again but the moment they left, the irrepressible tribe began raiding Sind and Kachhi.

It was their refusal to surrender that finally broke the strength of the tribe when, in October 1847, over seven hundred of them met their match in a Lieutenant (later Sir) William Merewether who, with a hundred and thirty men of the First Scinde Horse, completely defeated the Bugtis, cut off their retreat to the hills then offered quarter again and again. Stubbornly the Bugtis refused to surrender and in the end nearly six thousand men were killed and the remainder taken prisoner.

This disaster, coming on top of years of steady losses of the flower of Bugti warriors, paralysed the tribe. After this memorable battle about which, once again, the British had nothing but praise for the conduct of their stubbornly courageous enemy, a border chieftain attempted to stir up his neighbours with the suggestion that they should all assemble at Jacobabad under the pretence of making obeisance to the British. But once there, at a given signal, they should rise up and murder the unsuspecting European officers. Now the Bugtis fully justified the reputation they had gained for honour and gallantry.

Bibrak's son, Islam Khan the Second, who was now the Bugti Tumandar, protested that neither he nor his fellow-chieftains would join this proposed massacre since the British had always been just to them!

Alas, for the honourable Islam Khan; the Marris chose this moment to invade Bugti territory and now, with their finest warriors killed or captured, the Chieftain had no choice but to avoid battle and flee with many of the tribe, to Khetran, where his brother-in-law, Mir Haji was Chieftain.

With only a little breathing spell to recover, the Bugtis and Khetranis joined forces to attack the Marris, defeating them and carrying off their camels. Encouraged by this success, the Bugtis allied themselves with a Pathan tribe, the Musa Khel, in another attack on the Marris, but this time they encountered superior forces, lost over five hundred men and the survivors were forced to retreat.

These ding-dong battles continued right up to the present day. There was a brief period when Ghulam Murtaza became Tumandar and the Bugtis remained at peace with their neighbours, but it didn't last long. In 1861, Ghulam Murtaza was already showing signs of mental disturbances that marked many of the Bugti Tumandars in their later years, and finally the tribe decided to depose him. They elected his son as chieftain in his place and referred their case to their liege lord, the Khan of Kalat.

The Khan seemed unable to make up his mind and while he was still trying to do so, the tribe disintegrated with each clan struggling for supremacy.

The temporary truce between Bugti and Marri came to an end when Akbar Khan's grandfather, Sir Shahbaz Khan, then a young chieftain, invaded the Marri country in 1883 with twelve thousand mounted and foot tribesmen, carrying off seven hundred head of sheep and cattle, and once again the feuds were in full force.

There were old men sitting around us now, who remembered seeing Sir Robert Sandeman when he had penetrated the Bugti-Marri hills alone and unarmed, in an effort to bring the chieftains to a peaceful understanding. 'Lat Sind-e-man', as they called him, had on one occasion, gone to Philawagh and on another, in 1889, he had held a Durbar at which Sir Shahbaz Khan had organized a sports meeting where doubtless the sight of these fine athletes only helped to convince Sandeman that they would be welcome recruits to his Levy Corps. It was about this time that Colonel Holditch wrote:

'The Bugti or Marri chief in his trappings of war is as fine a figure of a man as can be found in all Asia,' adding that on his more difficult journeys he always preferred to hire, as a guide, a Baluch who had 'legs and feet of iron'.

Few of the tribesmen in Serani that night seemed to waste any time in sleeping. Long after the old men had moved away from the immediate vicinity of the charpoys, forming little groups all over the area, I could hear their voices as they exchanged the news and reminisced and discussed the jirga proceedings.

The two chieftains, Mir Ghulam Haidar, and I, privileged with our charpoys, pulled down the mosquito-nets and went to bed, fully-dressed, while a dozen or so tribesmen slept on the ground round about us.

For a long time I lay awake looking at the stars through the

mosquito netting that gave the illusion of privacy. The sounds of yet more new arrivals, the high-pitched voices exchanging the Hal, the tinkle of camel bells and jingle of harness melted together into a kind of lullaby. Once I was roused by the sounds of shouts and a great commotion by the Levy Thana, and next morning I was told that a large snake had wriggled through the middle of a group of cross-legged Masoris who had fallen upon the creature with their swords and sticks and carved it to small pieces.

At last I fell asleep; it was still quite dark when some sixth sense woke me with every nerve alert. I looked around cautiously but through the mist of the mosquito net everything seemed peaceful except for the murmurings of the voices in the distance. The illuminated face of my watch told me it was only three o'clock and I turned over to go to sleep again when I noticed a shadowy form creeping towards me from the direction of the Levy Thana.

The figure was threading its way with great caution among the recumbent forms on the ground, and seemed to be carrying in one upraised hand a musket or a sword, or perhaps it was a large and stout stick. And it was making straight for my charpoy!

For the first and only time during all my years with the tribe I was conscious of a sudden grip of fear.

'It's the old Fakir,' I thought. 'He's angry because he doesn't approve of my asking to go to Pir Suhri's tomb. Perhaps he thinks my presence is bringing ill-luck – maybe he's come to kill me, to rid his chieftain of an embarrassment!'

It seems silly now, but in that dark, moonless night my fears seemed only too tangible yet I was so petrified I couldn't even cry out. I had a flat-bladed kitchen knife lying with my torch and watch by my pillow – I'd brought it to use when scraping at the surface of prehistoric sites, and now, very carefully, trying not to reveal that I was awake and aware of the man's approach, I grasped the knife firmly.

The figure came closer, right up to the netting, then he disappeared round the foot of my bed.

I held my breath, cautiously untucking the netting from one side so that I could slip out of the bed, when suddenly, with ear-splitting shock, the air was filled with the strident tones of the Jhambiro and I nearly fainted with sheer relief.

There was no more sleep, though.

For the next three hours, until the horizon began to reveal the

Tumandar Akbar Shahbaz Khan, Chieftain of the Bugti tribe, holds the famous Waza-an-Kundi sword captured by his ancestor from the Mazari tribe

(Above) Durrag Nothanis, the mystics of the tribe, foretell the future from the shoulder blades of sacrificed sheep

(On left) Karim Bux Masori making sandals from the woven leaves of the dwarf palm

first faint signs of dawn, the dhambiro player sat about two feet from my ear, playing unceasingly with the greatest enthusiasm.

When we all eventually crawled out from our nets, Akbar Bugti apologized:

'I told him to come at prayer-time – that would be about half past five, and to sit behind the school and play softly!'

But in his anxiety to please, the old man had serenaded us most of the night.

I felt incredibly foolish and never dared reveal my fears. Instead I persuaded the two chieftains to come with me to the prehistoric mound where some Nothanis had dreamt of buried treasure, and spent an hour or two happily investigating before leaving Serani and the jirga and driving back to 'civilization' and the gas field.

12 Warriors to the End

'Ke marria ke talhe ishtar
Mazhairo Sher Ali khustar'

'When good luck leaves somebody,
Then Mazhair can kill Sher Ali'
(Ballad of the Battle of Chambri, Bugtis–Marris)

On a frosty October morning, in 1959, the frozen body of a middle-aged man, riddled with bullets, was found wedged into a karez, an irrigation channel, near the TB Sanatorium just outside Quetta.

And with this discovery began the end of an era for the once-powerful, turbulent Bugti tribe. For the body was that of Sardar Haibat Khan Bugti, Ahmad Nawaz Bugti's father-in-law, uncle to Nawab Akbar Khan's own wife, and the brother of Mir Ghulam Haidar!

Sardar Haibat Khan had been missing since 11 September when he had last been seen talking to one of the Chieftain's servants, Arshoo Khan, on the corner of a main shopping street in Quetta. Then the bombshell was dropped as Mir Ghulam Haidar accused the Chieftain himself of murdering his brother and at once the tribe was split into impassioned factions.

Only a year earlier Nawab Akbar Shahbaz Khan Bugti had been Minister of State for Defence in the short-lived Firoz Khan Noon Cabinet, immediately preceding Ayub Khan's military coup in October 1958. Now he was to be the first tribal chieftain to be tried under martial law, for although murder within tribal territory was not a capital offence, this particular murder was alleged to have taken place – or at all events, the corpse had been discovered – in the military cantonment area of Quetta.

Very little appeared in the Pakistan Press about the affair, but

living as I did within Bugti tribal country I couldn't help but share the initial shock, and tremendous emotional distress of the tribe, with rumours and speculation running through every conversation.

It all began fairly quietly; after all, we were well used to the idea of tribal feuds and killings. The unfortunate Arshoo Khan was grilled on and off for four weeks by the police, all the time denying any knowledge of the missing man. And meanwhile Akbar himself had gone to Quetta to try and trace his kinsman.

Then came the discovery of the body and at once the case was handed over to the military authorities and within four days of being interrogated by them, Arshoo Khan signed a statement incriminating his chieftain; Nawab Akbar Khan was arrested and held in solitary confinement in a camp later to be closed, but at the time referred to by Baluchis as a 'concentration camp'.

Murder and assassination were no novelties to this tribal chieftain who himself had told me of killing his first man when he was only twelve. Yet he was intelligent, too intelligent, I would have thought, to kill a man in Quetta where he was bound to be arrested, when he could so easily have arranged a discreet disappearance within the Bugti area whence no recriminations – other than a family feud – would have followed.

And why on earth leave the body in a channel which was known to be regularly inspected and cleaned, when it might have been hidden for ever in the tangle of mountains surrounding Quetta? As one prominent tribesman commented, 'It looks very much as though he has been framed by his enemies who want to get rid of him – he has too much power among the Baluch tribes.'

When the case was finally tried, it was by a military court, *in camera*. Sardar Ahmad Nawaz Bugti was at this time on holiday in Europe, but as soon as he heard of the arrest, he flew back to enlist all possible aid in his brother's defence. Now indeed was his loyalty to the Chieftain to be put to the test for, had he wished, he might well have taken advantage of this opportunity to rouse the tribe in his own favour, as had been done so often in the past by his predecessors. But with his brother's close friend, the Marri Chieftain, he hurried from one Government department to another, trying in vain to secure Akbar's release on bail.

For weeks after the Chieftain's arrest no positive news was heard of him, then for a while he was moved to the grim Mach

Jail in the Bolan Pass to await trial and sentence. It was a delicate situation for employees of the Oil Company and their families who had to be extremely careful not to become involved in tribal politics, and for me in particular it was a period of walking on egg-shells. My interest in the tribe and my journeys with the Chieftain and his brother were well known, and day after day Mohammed Mondrani would visit the bungalow and ask if I had any news of Nawab Sahib. Delegations of tribesmen would arrive at the door, or waylay my husband or me in the gas field, and with touching confidence in our powers, convinced we must be persons of influence to whom Government officials would listen with deference, begged us to intervene and secure Akbar's release.

On one occasion, invited to attend a Kalpar wedding at Goh, I arrived to find hundreds of Bugtis flourishing an assortment of arms and shouting rallying cries as they waited impatiently for a signal to rescue their Chieftain. Their leaders, all the Waderas, had left for Quetta to try and see the Tumandar, and this in itself was sufficient for the Government to send several hundred armed Pishin Scouts to camp around Dera Bugti, ready to suppress any signs of a rising.

To understand fully the Government's concern it is necessary to explain something of the background of the general tribal situation in 'the Land of Rebellion' at this time. The new Military Government was in no easy position, having fairly recently taken over the country and not yet firmly established. Various Baluch tribal risings in former Kalat State had culminated in the twenty stone Khan of Kalat defying Pakistani troops over the flying of his personal flag rather than the Pakistani flag. The Khan, whom I had met on several occasions, had barricaded himself in his palace, designed on the lines of the *Queen Mary*, as he told me once, with several 'decks' and his own personal quarters in the 'Captain's Cabin' on the top 'deck'. One shell from the encamped forces took off the top storey of the minaret attached to his private mosque by the side of the palace, while a second shattered a corner of his living-room.

Kalat's own artillery consisted of two or three old cannon captured from the East India Company and used for show only, as the troops had no ammunition.

The Khan was led away under arrest and his eighteen-year old son, Prince Daud, established in his place, but many of his staunch

supporters in the high Jhalawan and Sarawan hills allegedly inspired by Communist infiltrators from Afghanistan, took up the battle in the spring of 1959, using matchlocks and even resorting to hurling rocks against troops with machine-guns, hand-grenades and planes. It was a long time since the Baluch tribes had had such an excuse for a battle and it seemed as though everyone wanted to join in.

That uprising was quelled but there still remained the notoriously war-like Bugtis whose chieftain, after all, was a well-educated man who had actually held Cabinet rank, and there were some among the tribes who murmured that the charge against the Bugti Tumandar was an excuse to break the power of the tribe.

Meanwhile, in Quetta, two women were waiting with particular anxiety for the outcome of the trial. Although, as a Muslim, the Chieftain was legally entitled to have four wives, he had, in fact, only one, who was now expecting the birth of her seventh child in Bugti House in Quetta. But like a great many men in a similar position, Akbar Bugti had a girl-friend, in his case a Swedish girl whose association with the Chieftain had aroused a certain amount of controversy among some of the more conventional elements of the tribe and an excuse for criticism from some Government quarters, and she too was waiting in Quetta.

The trial began on 26 December, 1959, with some thirty-six prosecution witnesses including the Chieftain's brother-in-law, Rab Nawaz Khan of Khetran, who had signed a statement written by the investigating officer to the effect that on the night of the murder, Akbar had left a Smith & Wesson .32 revolver at his house in Quetta, asking him to look after it for him.

The murdered man, however, was said to have been shot by a Colt .38 which would seem to make the Smith & Wesson weapon pointless until Rab Nawaz Khan withdrew his statement, now alleging that this weapon had been planted on him. Later he was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for giving false evidence.

The whole affair, in fact, did seem to be particularly pointless and the only motive ever put forward for Haibat Khan's death was that he had been trying to create a rift between the Chieftain and his brother, Ahmad Nawaz Bugti.

In the months following the trial, pending the announcement of the sentence, Sui was like the spout of a boiling kettle in which the

tribe was seething with barely suppressed desires for traditional vengeance.

Eventually the Chieftain was found guilty, sentenced to death and an enormous fine. With his Defence Counsel, Qazi Isa Khan, the man who had first introduced me to Baluchistan at the suggestion of the Qaid-i-Azam, and with friends at Government level working on his behalf, in particular the then Foreign Minister Mr Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment and with that sentence came the fear of a repetition of the break-up of the tribe that had occurred when Akbar's great-grandfather Ghulam Murtaza had been deposed, leaving the tribe without a leader for some considerable time.

It was to try and avoid this situation that, a couple of months after presiding over the Sibi Mela, where I had met a worried and subdued Ahmad Nawaz with the Marri Chieftain, the Commissioner, Colonel Ibne Hassan arrived in Sui. It was to be his first visit to Dera Bugti where he would attend a jirga of the tribal elders and I soon begged to accompany this gentle, cultured, erudite man. He was extremely retiring and unmilitary in his manner and seemed just the sort of reasonable, tolerant kind of official to deal with a situation that was going to require every ounce of tact, and understanding.

Almost the entire route to the tribal headquarters was waylaid by Bugtis gathered on foot, horse and camel, rushing in front of the jeep, tearing off their turbans and picking up handfuls of dirt to rub in their long ringlets as they prostrated themselves on the ground with pleas for the Chieftain's release – up till now the tribe had not heard the sentence that had been pronounced. It was an intensely dramatic and moving experience to see men of all ages, even women, with tears in their eyes, weeping and crying aloud, trying to clasp the Commissioner's feet, attempting to stop the jeep, and it was only too obvious that it would need very little to spark off a full-scale revolt in such a highly charged, emotional atmosphere.

Grey-uniformed Pishin Scouts were bivouacked round the walls of Dera Bugti, tall men with straight, bobbed hair and flat-topped Swati caps. A large shamiana had been erected, the orange and black awning trimmed with bobbles making a brilliant splash of colour, with striped cotton rugs on the ground and deep-piled Baluch rugs spread on top around the edges where the Waderas

and the elders were to sit. I recognized many familiar faces among the headmen who had come to present a petition for the Chieftain's release, only to be greeted by the stunning news that he had been sentenced to fourteen years' transportation, and soon they began protesting violently.

The Commissioner heard them out from his armchair on a raised dais covered with fine rugs brought from Bugti House. Half a dozen wooden chairs and deckchairs were ranged below the dais and here sat officers of the Pishin Scouts, the Political Agent and, representing the Chieftain's immediate family, five-year-old Nazli in a cotton dress over white shalwar trousers, and her little brother Rehan, aged two and a half. The Chieftain's eldest daughter was in purdah and therefore at home with her mother and the two-month-old baby, while the two older boys, Salim and Talal, were at their father's old school, Aitchison College in Lahore.

Afterwards Colonel Ibne Hassan went himself to convey news of the sentence to Begum Bugti while she remained concealed behind the netting of the verandah, and soon after that a messenger came to fetch me to the women's quarters.

Sounds of wailing rose from within the bungalow and the Begum came to meet me at the door, her youngest daughter in her arms, her eyes red with frightened weeping. Within seconds I was surrounded by crying women begging me to try and do the impossible.

'This is the work of our traditional enemies, there are people who have threatened to kill our two eldest sons at school,' wept the Begum bitterly, begging me to ask the Commissioner to protect the boys and not to let them risk the journey back to Dera Bugti through tribal territory.

'Exile us, take all our lands and our property – we'll leave this place and never come back, but please ask the Government to protect my sons. I know these men, these enemies. They will kill them. Already you see they are claiming our lands; well, they can have those but please, please let us save our children . . .'

She was almost hysterical with fear and some time later I learnt that it was Mir Ghulam Haidar whose daughter's wedding to the nephew of the Mazari chieftain I had attended here in Dera Bugti, whom the Begum most dreaded. Since Mir Ghulam Haidar was the brother of the dead man, this alone would have been cause for

another of the inevitable tribal feuds. Indeed it was Ghulam Haidar who had first accused Nawab Akbar Khan of the murder, not because he was particularly fond of his dead brother, according to the family, but because he coveted the Chieftain's power and certain of his lands, particularly the profitable fertile lands near Larkhana which had been given the Tumandars by the British in the last century.

Colonel Ibne Hassan gave his word that the boys would be well guarded and, before leaving Dera Bugti, he set off on a round of inspection – the school, the bazaar and the jail – all in an extremely tense atmosphere. Finally we wound up at the Nawab's summer garden where the headmen had gathered in the manhir shaded by leafy fruit trees. On this hot April day the sudden drop in temperature, as one entered the garden, was quite remarkable, even more so accompanied by the pleasant sound and smell of the stream as it rippled through the channel in the manhir.

To the serving of green tea and sajji, the Waderas went into informal conference with the Commissioner. A month later it was announced that the sentence of fourteen years' transportation had been changed to one of a life sentence of twenty-five years to be spent in Pakistani jails. Nawab Akbar Bugti was moved to Hyderabad Jail where, as an 'A' class prisoner, he could enjoy visits from relatives and occasionally the Bugti Waderas, and reasonable comfort, with his own private quarters, servants and food of his choice.

By the end of that year Colonel Ibne Hassan was replaced by another Pathan Commissioner, Lieutenantt-Colonel Mohammed Yusuf Khan, almost more British than the British to look at and listen to, with a fondness for tweed suits and caps, brogues and Viennese briar pipes of all things.

Colonel Yusuf visited Sui in December 1960 and, like his predecessor, was to hold a jirga in Dera Bugti. This time the two eldest Bugti boys were to be present and I recalled the Begum's fears for their safety. Looking remarkably self-possessed and handsome, the two took their places in folding-chairs among the cross-legged Waderas. It was late afternoon when we arrived and the sun was casting long pinky-golden shadows on the stark bare hills surrounding the valley.

The Commissioner gave the Waderas the latest news of their Chieftain, asking for their loyalty to be transferred to his eldest

son, Salim, who was to be installed in his father's place, and assuring the tribe that from now on the Government would look after their interests in this much-neglected, out-of-the-way corner of Pakistan. To emphasize this he had come here especially to lay the foundation stone of the first dispensary to be built in the Bugti–Marri area (apart from the Oil Company's hospital which had been treating tribal patients whether or not they were employees). The land for the Dera Bugti dispensary had been donated by four Rahejas and since, so far, there was nothing but a patch of stony desert here, a tripod had been rigged up with the foundation stone, a slab of engraved marble from the Chagai district of Baluchistan, suspended on chains.

Two months later the Commissioner was back again, this time to lay a similar foundation stone for a four-bedded hospital to be built in the Bugti Colony on the Sui gas field, and another at Kahan, headquarters of the Marri tribe.

Up till now I had still not managed a trip to the Marri headquarters, so once again I attached myself to the Commissioner's retinue – together with faithful Mohammed Mondrani of Mut – and we set off in the cold February dawn, driving past Dera Bugti and on up the steep cliffs towards Serani.

At this early hour the country was deserted, the only signs of life being the smoke from a few fires here and there in the distance. But once the sun rose and began to pour out its warmth, men and women appeared along the route huddled in their pushtis. I saw more women during this journey than ever before in my travels through Bugti country, for in their distress over their Chieftain's imprisonment, all thoughts of purdah seemed to have been forgotten. If anything they were more determined than the men to stop the jeep so that they could plead with the Commissioner and men and women tore shawls or turbans from their heads, pulled their hair over their faces as they poured handfuls of dirt in their hair and cried out their appeals.

With these delays the journey took a lot longer than usual and by the time we were in sight of Serani the sun's rays had grown very strong. Instead of stopping at the Levy Post we skirted it to continue northwards over rather dull country until we entered a series of valleys winding through bare hills, some with sides as sheer as though sliced by a gigantic knife, others with hills of cream and dark brown on one side and green and red on the other.

About twenty miles from Kahan we reached two circular chezals or cairns of white stones about three feet high, each with a short upright in the middle, more or less on the boundary of the Bugti–Marri territory, and then at last, across a wide valley we saw Kahan, the high, mud-brick walls blending into the same coloured ground, almost isolated by nullahs that split up the eroded terrain around the cliff on which the town had been built.

The track from the nullah bed up the steep banks of the cliff to Kahan had been specially marked for us by small piles of stones, but there was obviously a knack in getting a vehicle up this slope and we didn't discover it at the first attempt. The jeep all but overturned and it required all hands – that included the team of political agents, forestry, agriculture, irrigation and other officials – to help right the vehicle and set it on the steep track again.

A wooden table and chairs had been set out in the open on a striped durrie, close to the tripod with the foundation stone suspended on chains.

Nawab Khair Bux Marri, in a tweed jacket over white shalwar trousers, was waiting to receive us with some anxiety. He hastened to explain to Colonel Yusuf that the site chosen for the hospital before Partition, by the then Political Agent, happened to be the traditional spot where the Marris held their jackal versus dog fights and that it had been selected without consulting him. However, he had an alternative site to suggest. First we went off to see the school, a single class of boys sitting outside a mud-brick building, the turbaned schoolmaster begging for a blackboard for his pupils. Next we went on to the land that belonged to Khair Bux Marri himself and where he suggested the Marris might have a new school built as well as a dispensary, and here the foundation stone was finally moved.

The Marris were huge men, taller than the Bugtis, generally speaking, and their beards were enormous. As they pressed around us in their hundreds I tried to imagine the feelings of the young Sandeman, alone and unarmed among just such a crowd of tough, probably not-too-friendly tribesmen; his peace mission a century ago must have taken tremendous courage and initiative. No wonder his name was still remembered with admiration among the Bugtis and Marris. Looking around at my companions, Pakistani Government officials, none of whom had ever before been in either Bugti or Marri territory, I had the impression that

some of them were not feeling too confident even today as to how this reception was going to turn out.

The narrow wooden gateway in the walls led directly into the main street with its small, open-fronted shops on either side, brilliantly decorated with hanging banners of brightly coloured cloth.

In the courtyard of Marri House, a splendid feast of sajji awaited us, prepared by these men whose ancestors had learnt the art from Genghis Khan's Mongols. Normally the tribe, like the Bugtis, would eat nan bread and perhaps share a bowl of milk drawn from a sheep, goat or camel with an occasional piece of dried meat called pursundar. This is usually meat that has been left over from the slaughtering of animals for a sajji feast and which is dehydrated by being rubbed with salt and hung up to dry in the sun for a month. It lasts for years and can be used in stews or grilled or just chewed raw if you're hungry enough.

Now, in honour of the Commissioner, the other officials and their Chieftain, the tribesmen eagerly helped prepare a truly gargantuan feast, grubby fingers enthusiastically peeling dozens of hard-boiled eggs which were handed around to the distinguished guests as *hors d'oeuvres*.

After the meal I begged a quick visit to a famous shrine just outside Kahan. It was Pir Haider Shah's tomb and it particularly interested me because I had discovered a prehistoric site in Kalat State which bore the name of this famous saint.

We passed a blind-folded camel walking an eternal circle as he drew water from a Persian well, turning the huge wheel with its old tin cans attached, filling with water as they rose, and spilling it into wooden troughs that fed the irrigation channels as the wheel carried them down again. Then in a large, sprawling graveyard we wound our way between many graves covered with smooth white stones, to one that was larger than the rest, covered with white sheets carefully held in place by flat stones, and with an assortment of branches stuck in the ground and adorned with pieces of fluttering rag and camel or sheep bells.

An old man, suffering from cataract and wearing a woman's green overcoat, was introduced to me as Sardar Fakir Guzin Marri, in charge of the grave. Several younger kinsmen were helping him straighten the sheet, while a wandering holy man, with half a gourd slung round his neck as a begging-bowl, stood watching the proceedings.

While the Fakir swept the stones and smoothed the sheet, Khair Bux Marri told me how Pir Haider Shah came to Kahan about two hundred years ago with his mother and a Dom, a minstrel, in attendance.

'Kahan was plagued by cholera then, so my ancestor, the Chieftain, asked Pir Haider Shah if he could help cure the tribe. The Pir said that he could but it would mean sacrificing his own life and that of his mother and the Dom, and that if he did this, the Chieftain must agree that members of his family and their descendants would tend their graves for ever after. Nobody really believed that the Pir would die, so they agreed to do this, but that night he did die and so did his companions,' Khair Bux Marri explained. 'Ever since then, their graves have been looked after by my ancestors and relatives – Fakir Guzin here is my maternal uncle,' he added, and I took another closer look at the bent old man in the tattered turban and cast-off coat.

'Nobody here has ever suffered from cholera since then,' the Chieftain went on. 'I always take a little khor – the earth from this grave – to protect me when I go to Sind or anywhere else where there may be cholera and, in fact, I've just taken some now.'

As it happened there was an outbreak of cholera in West Pakistan at that time and the main roads in Sind and Baluchistan were patrolled by doctors and dispensers who stopped all passers-by to check their inoculations and give them one on the spot if necessary. I doubted somehow whether the production of a handful of earth from the saint's tomb would save Khair Bux or anyone else from having the jab, but certainly this belief that swallowing the earth from a holy man's grave will protect you from various diseases, is very widespread all over Baluchistan.

I had been taking some photographs with the help of blue flash-bulbs and had a great deal of difficulty since my right arm was in a plaster cast – I'd just broken my right wrist for the third time. Now I saw Fakir Guzin was solemnly picking up my used bulbs and placing them on the chaphras – flat stones before the grave – where they lay with a fossil and a prehistoric flint.

Presently the Marri Chieftain borrowed a turban from one of the tribesmen in the party and wound the yards of white cloth round his own cropped locks before posing with his uncle by the Pir's shrine. Then I asked where his father was buried.

He looked around vaguely.

'The grave is here somewhere – I'm not sure where,' he confessed and began wandering around from one to another of the unmarked graves. By a large, square, brick-built mausoleum he paused to tell me that this imposing if dilapidated building contained the tomb of Hasalan, one of his ancestors, while a smaller one next door, in somewhat better condition, was identified as Doda Khan's tomb – 'he was a very famous warrior' – and finally, sadly neglected and simply covered with plain white stones, a grave near by that Khair Bux pronounced as his father's resting-place.

Back in Kahan we paid a state visit to the jail, a smaller one than in Dera Bugti, containing some half a dozen prisoners, four of them wearing leg-irons while one elderly man was cooking a leisurely meal in a corner of the courtyard. All six prisoners were serving short terms of imprisonment for murder.

I found Kahan particularly tantalizing since while I was there I learnt of a number of possible archaeological sites near by. But there was no possibility of side-tracking the Commissioner and his party farther afield and I could only hope I would have an opportunity in the future to accept the Chieftain's invitation to explore for myself. Alas, this was not to be, for in November 1965, Khair Bux Marri was deprived of ruling powers and the Government appointed his uncle, Doda Khan Tumandar in Khair Bux's place. Like his colleagues in the Bugti and Mazari areas, Doda Khan had acted as Regent while the young Chieftain was in college (his father too, having been murdered).

In a convoy of jeeps laden with minor Government officials, Doda Khan, full younger brother of Khair Bux's father, drove along a newly-made road to tribal headquarters at Kahan, there to be introduced to the tribe as their new Chieftain. His reception was less than enthusiastic and on the road back, when the convoy entered a narrow gorge, firing broke out from the hills on either side. The officials in the rear jeeps made a rapid turn-around and escaped, but Doda Khan, in the leading jeep, ordered his driver to stop, and climbed out to shout up at the marksmen,

'Don't shoot – I am Doda Khan, your new Tumandar,' under the impression that this was just a routine ambush.

'But it's *you* we're shooting at,' was the reply.

Too proud to turn and run, Doda Khan courageously

disregarded his driver's plea to escape in the jeep, stood his ground and, of course, was riddled with bullets.

That was the end of Government attempts to force a new Chieftain on the tribe. Instead the Marris are now administered by a panel consisting of Government officials such as the Political Agent and Extra Assistant Commissioner, with two or three Marris. The Bugtis too are now administered by a similar panel including Fakir Lakha of Pir Suhri's shrine, and Mian Khan, the Masori Jaffrani Wadera.

A few weeks after my Kahan trip a messenger led his camel through my kitchen garden to deliver an invitation for me to join Begum Bugti in a pilgrimage to the shrine of Mir Durbar Shah in the Zin Range. It was close to the prehistoric site where Bugtis had been finding the five thousand-year-old bowls used in the Begum's household. Since the Begum wanted to leave Dera before dawn, I was up at 2 a.m. to drive to tribal headquarters with Mohammed Mondrani and Hayat Khan Kalpar. At Dera we picked up a fourth passenger, Jamak Pirozani, Wadera of the area in which the shrine was situated. In the Chieftain's bright red jeep, the Begum with her sister-in-law and five of her children, sat hidden in black bourkas, while the Mratta maid-servants, Durkhatu and another younger woman in spite of their slave origins enjoyed far more freedom than their mistress, and never had to bother with the suffocatingly hot coveralls.

I had imagined that by now I knew all the variations of desert that Bugti territory could offer, but I was wrong. There was perhaps more variety in this trip than in any I had encountered of a similar length. We set off down the sandy bed of the Siahaf nullah, stopped every now and then by groups of ragged Raheja tribesmen who, seeing the Nawab's scarlet jeep, hoped for news of the Chieftain. As the Begum told me later, they were all relatives, members of her husband's comparatively small paro, the Bibrakzai Rahejas, and from what I had seen, apparently the most impoverished of all the Bugtis.

We turned off the nullah to climb up the river bank towards the towering Zin Range and suddenly found ourselves in an area of black and brown volcanic stones where a single sand-dune of brilliant orange-gold stood out among low, parti-coloured hills as though coffee had been poured over a mound of vanilla ice-cream.

With not so much as a camel-track in the region, the Begum had sent out her servants the day before to mark the trail with small piles of stones and at one point where the cliff descended almost vertically to a dried-up river bed, we all got out to slither and slide down the cliff-side while the drivers negotiated the hazard with empty jeeps.

It was a weird and desolate area and not much better on top of the plateau called Zin Jik, where half a dozen graves piled with the usual smooth, white rounded stones protruded like small blisters above the stony surface. It was only eighteen miles from the second wild-cat well drilled by the Oil Company, and close to an airstrip cleared and built by the Company at that time. A few Pirozani Bugtis with wildly-disordered straggling locks and turbans piled on their heads like heaps of dirty, tangled washing, were already waiting by the shrine. Two of the larger graves were covered with white sheets and picked out by the branches stuck into the ground at their head, from which pieces of rag and bells and ibex horns were hanging.

A chaphra stone stood at the foot of each grave, each holding offerings of oddly-shaped stones, beads, cowrie shells, buttons, spent cartridges, pieces of broken glass and broken combs – and later, my used blue flash-bulbs!

There was a mud-pisé shelter for pilgrims and a sprawling, open-sided manhir roofed with dried grasses and tamarisk branches, while another small mud hut was used by the resident caretaker.

The first essential was to ensure privacy for the women and in no time at all a reed shelter had been rigged up between the two mud huts.

Next all the men were cleared away from the vicinity while the Begum and her daughters and sister-in-law circled the graves and made their quiet petitions. Meanwhile, leaving them to their prayers, I joined the growing crowd of Pirozanis, nearly all elderly men, who had gathered round the two fat-tailed dumba sheep brought up for sacrifice. Rupee notes were pressed on to the animals' backs in a gesture of contribution, prayers were offered and then the animals' throats were cut in orthodox Muslim fashion. Two or three old greybeards set about skinning the headless bodies with swift skill, pulling the wool skins off the corpses inside out just as though they were taking sweaters off a man.

The meat was cut up and skewered on to long spears ready to be set between the two banks of slow-burning wood. Part of it was to be presented to the guardian of the shrine as an offering, the rest would be divided among the many pilgrims to the shrine. At this juncture I was convinced that a fight was about to start, as parties of wild-eyed Bugtis waved their firearms in the air and shouted furiously, but it was merely an argument between two groups of Pirozanis as to who should fetch the firewood!

Two small boys loosed their home-made catapults at imaginary birds and not so imaginary human targets when they thought they were not being watched and then Monha, the old Mratta major-domo came bustling up with baskets of sweets the Begum had brought for distribution, sweets made of milk and honey and almonds in her own kitchens, cooked slowly and stirred patiently for hours on end.

For these Chandrazi Pirozani Nothanis, some of the poorest tribesmen I had seen, they must have been a rare treat and all arguments were forgotten as they eagerly gathered round for their share. And now it was their turn to approach the shrine, first removing their sandals of woven peesh and leaving them on the edge of the consecrated land. Barefoot they walked on the sharp stones, circling the grave with its white covering, tearing off their turbans to flail the long strips of material through the air and on to the shrine. At the same time they cried aloud to Allah to come to the rescue of their Tumandar, while others, less dramatically, followed Monha's lead and stood with cupped hands held before them, praying aloud.

Now that the main object of the expedition had been achieved, the Begum and her sister-in-law put on blue and white sneakers and set off to lead the way to the prehistoric site they'd told me about, followed by the Mratta women-servants and the children. A little procession of camels approached as we walked over the stony plateau and as they neared, an old man changed course and came over to meet us. He was the Begum's uncle and had brought his sister, her mother, along to add their prayers to the others being offered at the shrine. As soon as he heard what we were doing, he left the camels and joined us in our search for archaeological treasures at Bagh-i-Khumb.

Several hours later we managed to tear ourselves away and return to the shrine and the sajji. Fifty or sixty more Chandrazi

Bugtis, seeing the parked jeeps, had joined the original pilgrims and as I sat with the Begum in the cool shade of the reed shelter, I could hear their excited voices exchanging the Hal and then noisily praying by the hanging bells and ibex horns.

I had promised to be back in Sui that night, so I said good-bye to the family and set off on the return journey with Hayat Khan and Mohammed Mondrani. We were in a comparatively narrow gorge when I noticed what appeared to be a vast cloud of smoke in the far distance. Although we were driving as fast as we could over the bumpy ground, the cloud seemed to thicken and increase in size far too rapidly to have come from a fire, and then I thought it must be a freak cloud formation hanging very low over the hills.

Next moment we were in the middle of what Mohammed called 'Makri, Makri' and for the next ten minutes we were forced to a complete standstill by a blinding screen of dark red locusts, their wings whirring noisily, blacking out the windscreen, covering the tamarisk bushes on the banks of the nullah and laying a dark carpet of avid bodies on the ground around us. It was quite terrifying and I couldn't even photograph the scene for I dared not get out of the vehicle and the windscreen was entirely blacked out with the crush of the flying bodies.

When we finally drove on, I could hear the shells of thousands of locusts crackling and crunching beneath our wheels.

It wasn't long after this pilgrimage that Nawab Akbar Shahbaz Khan Bugti was released from jail, only eighteen months after his trial and sentence, first to death and then deportation and finally life imprisonment.

However, it seems that Mir Durbar Shah was not responsible for this miracle but Pir Suhri, the Bugtis' most powerful guardian saint. While he was still in Hyderabad Jail, the Chieftain dreamt that Pir Suhri visited him in his prison cell and told him he was leaving Bugti territory for good, and taking up his wanderings in the direction of Sind. But, before he left, he would make one last gesture by seeing that Akbar was freed. And, sure enough, the very next day the Chieftain was informed that if he paid a Rs. 50,000 fine he would be released unconditionally!

Back in Bugti territory, one of the first actions the Chieftain performed was to gather the Waderas and tell them of his vision and of Pir Suhri's departure. He also conveyed the message that

the Pir had added, saying that he did not want the customary offerings of food and money to be continued – these were normally given to Fakir Lakha – though the Chieftain added that this should not stop anyone who wished to continue with the gifts.

Most tribesmen accepted the fact that the Saint's spirit had departed and ceased to pay their tribute so, to compensate, the Chieftain gave Fakir Lakha an allowance. But the old man whose stern features had so alarmed me at Serani was not pleased at this turn of events and his loss of status and became distinctly hostile. Indeed, the Chieftain's freedom was short-lived. Only six months later he was again arrested on the accusation that when martial law had been lifted in West Pakistan he had endeavoured to undermine the Government in power through seditious political speeches, made, not by Akbar Khan Bugti but by his Baluch friends. So the old sentence for murder, which had been suspended on payment of the fine, had been reimposed. This time he was in jail to stay, moved from prison to prison, each time a little farther away from Bugti area. Every now and again he is offered his freedom on condition that he gives an unconditional apology and promises not to intrigue against the Government, but this he refuses to do. Stubborn, proud, the typical traditional Bugti warrior, he is turbulent and rebellious, but even in jail he is openly admired by his enemies.

During his brief freedom, however, Nawab Akbar Bugti had taken the traditional method of trying to prevent a blood-feud between his branch of the family, and Mir Ghulam Haidar's, and had not only promised two of his daughters in marriage to members of the family, but had paid Rs. 50,000 in compensation for the murder of Haibat Khan.

Now my own stay in the area was coming to an end. I enjoyed a nostalgic return to the north-western part of Baluchistan when I went on tour with the Quetta Commissioner, Colonel Yusuf, along the Chagai–Afghan border. We drove westwards to the wild tangle of mountains on the frontiers of Iran, duplicating almost exactly a journey I had made in 1947, revisiting and photographing again many of the prehistoric mounds I had discovered during my earlier visit. I loved travelling like this.

But life in Sui was not just one continuous round of expeditions outside the Field. There were times when I had to be there to present prizes to the children in the Company school – only a

dozen pupils when it opened as a primary school in 1957 but a hundred and seventy boys and girls now studying in the Government-approved Middle and Primary schools. There were Meena bazaars where purdah-keeping wives of Pakistani employees could enjoy shopping at a time when all the menfolk had been banished from the Company shopping-centre, and purdah tea parties where the three or four European wives struggled to converse with the mainly very shy and non-English speaking Pakistani wives. And there were sports' days and national ceremonies such as Republic and Independence celebrations with the appropriate flag-hoisting, plus the usual entertaining of official visitors to the Field. And as this grew in importance, being the largest in Asia and certainly of paramount importance to Pakistan's national economy, it attracted ever-increasing numbers of overseas visitors and high-ranking Government officials, Ministers and Ambassadors. My husband's final task before being transferred from Sui to Burma was to make all the detailed preparations for the visit of the President of Pakistan, Field-Marshal Ayub Khan. Although I had met the Field-Marshal on several occasions both before and after his entry into politics and had extracted a firm promise that he would visit us in Sui, to our intense disappointment we were moved only a few days before the President actually did arrive there.

The man who acted as liaison officer between Sui management and the President, was a personal friend whose presence never failed to act as a great stimulus. The late General Hayaud-din Khan, Director of the Bureau of Oil and Mineral Resources, small in stature but immense in heart and character, was one of the most delightful, erudite, tremendously vital men I have ever encountered. At Staff College, Camberley, it was perhaps inevitable that he should be nicknamed 'Gunga' and among his friends the name stuck. Whenever he could spare time from his official duties he would stay with us in Sui where he shared my own enthusiasm for archaeology and was especially keen that I should write this book about the Bugti tribe.

On my way back to Europe, after living in Burma and Assam, I stopped off in Karachi to meet him again at the beginning of 1965. At an informal dinner-party which he and his equally charming wife gave for the Commissioner for Karachi and the Afghan Minister for Information, Gunga was, as usual, displaying

my books and the prehistoric pots he had brought back from Dera Bugti. Then and there we made plans for my return, when I would make my base with the Hasyaud-dins and revisit the Bugtis to bring my information up to date.

'I'll make all the arrangements for you, transport and anything else,' he added, and since he was soon to visit London we agreed to finalize the plans then.

But only a few weeks later, as the newly-appointed Chairman of the Press Trust of Pakistan, he was among the victims of the tragic PIA plane crash at Cairo, when the cream of Pakistan's press and information representatives lost their lives on this ill-fated inaugural flight.

It seemed unbelievable that such an intensely vital personality should have been extinguished and it was perhaps this fact more than anything else that finally stimulated me into making a start at last on the book we had so often discussed.

What does the future hold for the Bugti tribe now?

I saw significant changes in their traditional way of life, even in the few years that I spent among them. For instance, when I first visited the gas field in 1955, a few members of the tribe were employed as unskilled labourers making roads and clearing the ground for permanent buildings, some of them working two to a shovel, (one pulling on a rope attached to the handle, the other pushing); some trundled wheelbarrows which only a few months earlier had been such novelties that the only way they could imagine moving them had been to lift them up bodily!

By the time I left Sui, Bugtis were being trained to work on lathes in the workshops, as trainee mechanics, maintaining machinery in the purification plant, driving trucks and cars and in a few cases, doing clerical work in the offices. Men and boys attended classes in the Company's school, first learning Urdu, then English, while half a dozen scholarships were provided by the Company for specially promising tribesmen to continue higher studies in the Government High School in Quetta.

Bugtis who had never dreamt of eating anything more sophisticated than rice or nan and on festive occasions, sajji, were soon buying blocks of ice from the gas field plant, and tinned and fresh foodstuffs from the Company-subsidized shopping-centre, while a less happy innovation was the mixing of European garments

with their own tribal dress, and, in some cases, the forsaking of tribal dress altogether. That, I suppose, is progress, and inevitable, but it always seems a great pity to me when I see the very unattractive (and, usually, quite impractical from the point of view of climate) European dress take the place of traditional costume, in whatever part of the world it might be.

Mohammed Mondrani of Mut and his family reflected these changes very vividly. His eldest son, Taj, who had been presented to me on my arrival, and whom we had employed to look after our horses, soon cut his long hair and discarded his turban. And before we left he spent four rupees on a tawaz, a sacred amulet that he hoped would ensure he got a trainee's job in the workshops that my husband had promised him. Taj's younger brother, Lal, who came to work for us also, helping the cook, soon became much more westernized even than Taj, taking to shirt and trousers as well as a European hair-cut, attending classes at the Sui school, and passing on the lessons to the younger members of his family.

When the time came for his marriage, arranged at babyhood, he grumbled loudly, and begged his father to spend the wedding money on a bicycle for him, rather than a bride! The bride, however, was sixteen, a year older than Lal, and Lal's protests were overridden on this occasion. He still insisted to me, however, that at the first opportunity he was off to Lahore or Quetta to seek his fortune outside the tribal area, and to help achieve this he was determined to learn to drive and train as a mechanic in the Sui workshops.

But for the majority of tribesmen living in their mountain fastnesses or barren deserts, life had remained unchanged for centuries. Unlike the inhabitants of many Middle East countries who often share the wealth brought by the discovery of oil or natural gas, the Bugtis as a whole have so far seen few tangible benefits from the riches discovered beneath their sizzling deserts. Tribal life remains violent as ever – indeed, the violence overspills into the everyday life of the gas field as, for example, when a twenty-four-year-old Pakistani engineer, who had only just returned from England where he received his engineering degree, was stabbed to death. It happened at his desk one afternoon when I was visiting my husband in his office a few doors away. Suddenly I was aware of running footsteps and shouts and

looked out to see the attacker, a disgruntled tribesman, rushing out of the office and off into the desert.

Besides, fatally wounding the young engineer, he had also stabbed another Pakistani who had gone to the engineer's assistance.

As for inter-tribal feuds, it will be many years before these become a thing of the past.

When I revisited Sui with my husband at the beginning of 1965, I received a touching welcome from Mohammed Mondrani and his family, and from our many other friends at the gas field. Among the crowd to meet us on the airstrip was Mir Ghulam Haidar, the Chieftain's kinsman and accuser. His smile was as smooth as ever, though I thought he seemed a little worried and preoccupied.

If so, it was with good cause for only weeks later he was sitting having a meal behind the high mud walls of his new house in the Bugti Colony, part of the Sui community, when the door was pushed open and a group of men walked in.

'Tell your wife to go,' they ordered, and, frightened, Mir Sahib's wife disappeared into the back room. Seconds later she heard her husband pleading for mercy, followed by the sound of shots. Mir Ghulam Haidar lay dead on the floor while the men had walked out of the house and disappeared into the desert!

Retribution had followed his part in Akbar Khan's imprisonment and now, I suppose, Ghulam Haidar's relatives will some time, somewhere, take their revenge, and so it goes on, history repeating itself with murder and intrigue and the continuous struggle for power. Except that now, for the first time in their history, the Baluch tribes have sunk their differences to unite in a protracted rebellion against authority. In the tangle of mountains in Jhalawan and Sarawan, Baluchis have cut the roads to Kalat, capital of the formerly princely State of that name. Government armed police and military forces are once more in possession of the Bugti and Marri headquarters while the hard core of the tribes themselves, retreating to their virtually impregnable hills, emerge only at night to raid villages in the plains, hold up trains and motor vehicles in the Bolan Pass, and rob and pillage.

And how and where can it end? Can these traditionally lawless tribes so cussedly and illogically proud that they consider it more praiseworthy to steal cattle and grain than to demean themselves

by working and earning money – can such men as these ever fit into the pattern of modern, democratic civilization as we know it, or must this dream be left for the coming generation?

Certainly it will require much tact, tolerance and, above all, patience and understanding from both the Government in power and the tribes themselves before they can be assimilated into our present-day way of life. And yet, given this and the will to find a solution, life for these 'Tigers of Baluchistan' might be one of fulfilment and constructive participation, for they have many good qualities to offer.

It's true that tribal traditions die hard; a Bugti's first loyalty is to his paro, then his clan, then his Chieftain, and it will be a long time before he regards himself first and foremost as a Pakistani.

Mohammed Mondrani of Mut and his companion were travelling with me to Sibi. The Pakistan driver stopped the vehicle and got out to prostrate himself on the desert sand to say his evening prayers.

'Why don't you join in the namaz also?' I asked Mohammed. 'Aren't you Mussalmanis?'

'Oh yes,' Mohammed replied. 'I am Mussalman but I am a Mondrani,' as though that fact exempted him from any spiritual duties. The old man with him nodded.

'That is true talk, we are Mondranis,' he emphasized.

Not Pakistanis, not Mussalmanis, not even Bugtis – but Mondranis; the clan claimed their first loyalty!

And until the day comes when the Bugtis can take a wider view of life and enlarge their outlook, the majority of these 'Rinds of the swift mares,' who can boast, 'I have not made war like a jackal, but like a tiger have I burst through my foes. . . .' will remain secluded in their fortress-like hills, singing nostalgically of Mir Chakur and past glories, and wiping out real or fancied injuries with the one weapon to which there can be no reply – death!

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